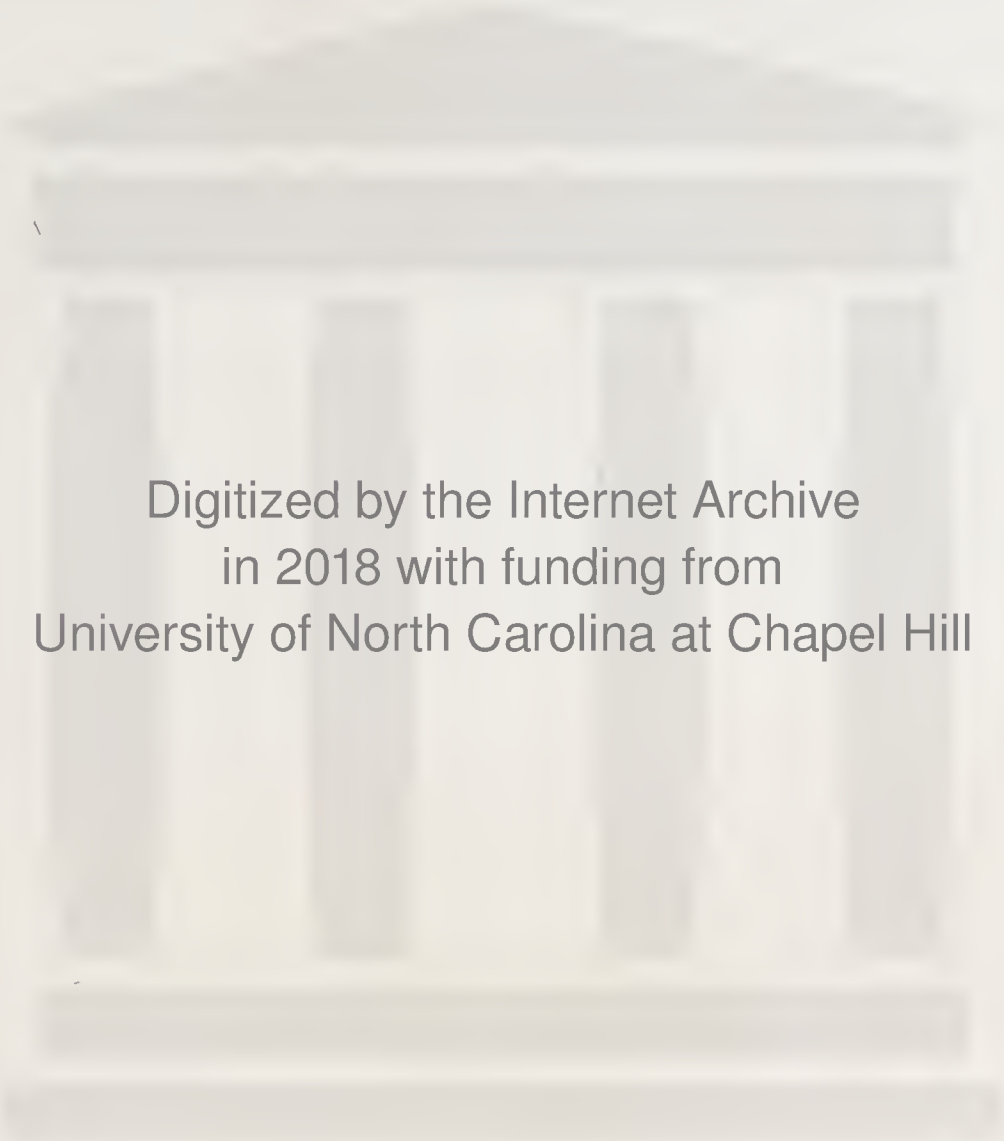


Annex

47



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

BM
=

KNAVERY UNMASKED

OR

THE CONFESSIONS OF A CELEBRATED DACOIT

BY

AN INDIAN DETECTIVE

AUTHOR OF

‘ROMANCE OF INDIAN CRIME,’ ‘TALES OF THE INDIAN MUTINY,’

‘REVELATIONS OF AN INDIAN DETECTIVE,’ ‘EVERY MAN

HIS OWN DETECTIVE,’ &c., &c.

~~~~~

W. H. ALLEN & CO., LD.,

LONDON AND CALCUTTA.

1891.

(All rights reserved).



## P R E F A C E.

I was travelling, a couple of years ago, with a gentleman largely interested in Railway Book Stalls in England. In the course of conversation he mentioned to me the kind of literature most in favour with railway travellers. The largest run, he said, were on books containing a collection of short amusing stories, each, with just sufficient reading matter to keep the mind occupied during the run between Stations. Sketches of character, would, he thought, be more popular in any other form than that of a novel. If a book were produced delineating character for English readers after the model of Boccaccio's Decameron, it would take immensely. The Decameron, though it is only a translation, and the manners and customs of the characters delineated are foreign and un-English, yet the book has continued to amuse all Europe for four centuries, and is as popular to-day as when it first appeared.

I have taken the hint, and followed the model of the Decameron in producing the following sketches of Native Indian character. The stories are all more or less—and, I may add,—more than less, founded on fact. They embody a life's experience of the crooks, the turns, and the windings of the Asiatic mind.

I may mention, in conclusion, that "Knavery Unmasked" appeared in the columns of the *I. P. Gazette* last year.

THE AUTHOR.



# CONTENTS.

---

| <i>Chapter</i>                                                                                       | <i>Page</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| I. Mahamed Ali's Story ...                                                                           | 1           |
| II. Dacoity ...                                                                                      | 12          |
| III. The Chief's Story ...                                                                           | 22          |
| IV. Peer Khan's Story ...                                                                            | 31          |
| V. The Pathan's Story ...                                                                            | 41          |
| VI. The Fakir's Story ...                                                                            | 52          |
| VII. The Baboo's Story ...                                                                           | 65          |
| VIII. The Native Christian's Story ...                                                               | 73          |
| IX. The Story of the "Mock Rajah" ...                                                                | 85          |
| X. The Darogah's Story ...                                                                           | 93          |
| XI. The Story of a Professional Thug ...                                                             | 102         |
| XII. The Pir's Story ...                                                                             | 112         |
| XIII. The History of a "Suttee" ...                                                                  | 124         |
| XIV. The Astrologer's Story ...                                                                      | 136         |
| XV. The Story of an escaped convict from the Andamans                                                | 146         |
| XVI. The Story of Nunsoling the Naga ...                                                             | 159         |
| XVII. The Story of the Village Chowkeydar ...                                                        | 168         |
| XVIII. The Ghatak's Story ...                                                                        | 181         |
| XIX. The Story of an Ex- C. S. ...                                                                   | 191         |
| XX. The Story of a Professional Burglar ...                                                          | 201         |
| XXI. Ally Mahomed relates his experience of travelling<br>on the Brahmapootra in the 'good old days' | 221         |
| XXII. The Burman relates how arms and ammunition<br>are smuggled out of British India ...            | 225         |
| XXIII. The Story of a Police Spy ...                                                                 | 238         |
| XXIV. The Story of an Opium Smuggler ...                                                             | 248         |
| XXV. The Story of an Aspirant to a Throne ...                                                        | 256         |
| XXVI. The History of a remarkable Murder ...                                                         | 266         |
| XXVII. The Story of a Professional Coiner ...                                                        | 277         |
| XXVIII. John Chinaman's Story ...                                                                    | 288         |
| XXIX. The Story of a City Sharper ...                                                                | 299         |
| XXX. The Story of the Ojha (Demon Expeller) ...                                                      | 313         |
| XXXI. The Story of a Koord: a Romance in real life ...                                               | 322         |
| XXXII. Concluding Story, a Big Dacoity ...                                                           | 333         |

---



# KNAVERY UNMASKED;

OR,

## THE CONFESSIONS OF A CELEBRATED DACOIT.

BY

AN INDIAN DETECTIVE.



### CHAPTER I.

*Romance of an Indian Famine*  
~~MAHAMED ALI'S STORY.~~

THERE is, perhaps, no country in the world in which the annals of crime afford more ample material for sensational writing than India, and none where the opportunities are so rarely utilised. The harvest, indeed, is plenteous, but the labourers are few. We need not indent on the realms of fancy and imagination to give colour to the picture, or heighten its effect, for mere truth is stranger than fiction! Neither is it necessary to go so far back as the days of *suttee*, or of the *thugs*, when the fatal noose, or the poisoned *chapattie* was the dread of travellers and belated pedestrians, in search of a subject to point a moral or adorn a tale. The records of the Criminal Courts of India bear ample testimony to the existence of romance in real life, the stock-in-trade of sensational novelists.

The confessions of the hero of the following thrilling and interesting narratives will introduce the reader to



a new world of crime, villainy, and trickery as these exist throughout the length and breadth of our vast Indian Empire. The narrator is a released convict, a convert from Hinduism. Mahamed Ali, for that was the name he adopted, had been convicted of dacoity and sentenced to transportation for life, but on the occasion of the Queen's Proclamation was pardoned and released, with two thousand other life-convicts, at the age of fifty-five years. He had been a daring dacoit from a comparatively early age. His undaunted courage, fearless audacity and remarkable ingenuity in committing breaches of the law and of evading and escaping detection and punishment raised him to the dignity of a hero among his own fraternity. Even the common people almost worshipped him as a demi-god! He was second only in name and fame to the celebrated Tanti Bheel before his capture and conviction. These "confessions" were recorded while the convict was confined in the premises since converted into a reformatory school at Alipore in the suburbs of Calcutta after his return from the Andaman Islands. We will begin with the history of the convict's early life, as related by himself:—

7 "I am a convert from Hindooism and the youngest of seven brothers. We were Khettrees by caste, and what is more than that, Chohans, but we were poor, and our inheritance was small. Our father had sent three of us to Calcutta to seek service as durwans, two to join the army, and two, the eldest and myself, remained at home. I was in my twentieth year when the crops failed, the rains came so late as to make sowing next to useless, but we did our level best, nevertheless. All our efforts were in vain all the same. Day followed day, but the *Agni* drove the mists away and only sent us clouds of dust when we had hoped

and prayed for rain. The heavens did at last break and sent down a torrent of water which washed our fields bare, and drowned our last and only hope! The *mahajuns* raised the price of food to starvation point. Our brethren could not send us help enough and our family store slowly but surely melted away. We knew that before another harvest could come to save us, we should have nothing to eat. The low castes managed to find food, but of the most abhorrent and revolting description; the Khettrees preferred starvation to pollution! At last, after our women had walked in their shame three times round the parched fields, and the wolves had grown fat on the bodies of the wretched *raiyats* who had died while seeking roots and berries in the jungles, a Brahmin *jogee* came round our village, crying, Alas! and alas! the wrath of Kali has overtaken my people!

“He was a tall, cadaverous individual, with long matted hair and beard, grey with ashes. His small sunken eyes gleamed with a horrible fire, and seemed to pierce your inmost soul! I was unfortunate enough to incur his hate. Young and strong, I could not believe that the day would come when our father would close the house door, and bid us choose, because we had eaten our last meal, and spent our last pice, whether we would sit still and die, or whether, as became the sons of Chohan fathers, we would not rather accept a blow from his knife! At this moment the *jogee* came to the gate, and called on my father to do his duty as a Hindoo, and avert the wrath of Kali from the perishing land. It is hopeless, my father said in reply, to fight against fate, it is better that I should put on my sword and buckler and perish in front of my clan! But the *jogee* replied, fools only die in that way, Kali wants her rites and must be propitiated! He

then cast upon my father a look of withering scorn accompanied with a terrible curse, if he failed in his duty to the goddess. ✱ Indignant at the *jogee's* insolence to my father, who was a Chohan, I rudely told him to begone! that we neither feared him or his threats! He made no answer, but gazed at me until, in spite of my courage and determination, I felt as if his look were drying up the very life blood within me. But I would not yield, and I felt my spirits rise as my father told the *jogee* this was no time for folly, and desired him to leave the place. The moment he turned to depart, I fell down in a faint. Some days after this I was told by my father that there was to be a great meeting in the old temple of Kali. The *jogee* would preside, and all the Brahmins, including the Khettrees, for miles around were summoned to attend. The lower castes were excluded, as the meeting was to decide in what way the wrath of Kali should be averted. My father next directed me to proceed to a certain *mangoe tope*, that had once been our possession, and dig beneath a tree which he indicated, for the family armour. These I was ordered to bring home, clean and prepare for use. The night of the meeting came in due course, and my father, brother and myself, each clad in a coat of mail and with swords and shields repaired to the old temple of Kali. A large crowd had already assembled in front of its mouldering gateway. The walls of the temple itself loomed up in the darkness like a huge shadowy mansion, and its silence and gloom made us all feel how solemn a mission we had come upon. Presently a lighted torch appeared in the distance. As it approached the demon face of the *jogee* could be seen at intervals as he followed in the footsteps of the torch bearer. He passed in silence through the crowd, as if he had not noticed



those who were waiting for him. Mounting the platform on which the *mundir* was built, he called for lights and directed the assembled multitude to enter the temple with him. The people obeyed and approached the *mundir* in profound silence. A dozen of torch lights gave a wild and unearthly appearance to the sea of careworn and anxious faces fixed on the *jogee*. Nearly every man had a shield or armour of some kind and in every girdle depended a sword or dagger. My father and a few other leading men amongst the crowd wore shirts of mail. These were singled out to form a kind of bodyguard to the *jogee*, who, I may mention was a Bengalee. Just as he was about to address the meeting, two huge cobras sprung up from behind the idol. They reared themselves up and expanding their hoods continued to hiss and sway backwards and forwards as the *jogee* raised or lowered his voice; and when he paused in his discourse the cobras sank down and disappeared beneath the statue of the goddess. The meeting became spell bound. It seemed as Kali herself had appeared amongst us, and every man present was prepared to lay down his life at the bidding of the *jogee*. The *jogee* burst out again into a wild chant and the cobras reappeared and literally danced an accompaniment. He was singing to Kali and telling her we would do all she required. The chant ceased and the serpents drew back and disappeared as before. Not a soul moved. The *jogee* raising his hand told the meeting that Kali herself was present amongst them and had accepted the offer that he had made in behalf of the starving multitude, namely, that three of their youths and three maidens should be sacrificed that night week. Every head bowed in acquiescence. The *jogee* then moved away from the idol and taking his stand in the centre of the

crowd made each man come forward and swear in presence of the goddess to do her bidding and keep her secret. Each in turn went forward, and the *jogee* poured into his hand a few drops of Ganges water over which he swore to do as the holy man had directed and finally drinking the water bowed, and said a short prayer to the goddess.

“Then came the horrible task of selecting the victims! The *jogee* asked if the fathers present would make a choice, or if they preferred that he should do it for them? Of course he had his own way in the matter, and I was the first youth singled out for slaughter! Two others about my own age were next selected from amongst the young men present. The girls had to be chosen from the low castes as Chohan fathers rear no daughters. After the selection of the victims the *jogee* advanced towards the goddess, the mail clad men forming a line on either side of him and the torch bearers in front. At a given signal one of the Brahmins present brought in a goat which another Brahmin decapitated at a single blow. Its head was placed in front of the goddess and each of the male victims were called up, and marked on the forehead, breast, and arms with the blood. Then the *jogee* led us all outside of the temple, and warning us, on pain of everlasting torment, not to forget our oath and duty to the goddess, dismissed us. The *jogee* then departed as he had come, in silence, accompanied by a single torch bearer. I felt at the time both honoured and disgraced. Honoured that I was chosen to die for my people in order to purchase the favour of Kali; disgraced at the thought of being defiled with blood, being a Chohan. After this no one spoke to me or noticed me, unless to treat me as an idol is treated. I was told by the *jogee* I might do as I liked during the

few days allotted to me ; and that if I desired it I might have the fairest damsel in the neighbourhood as a companion. But Chohans have no such desires. It was my father's duty by right to find me a wife ; and I told the *jogee* so. I had a strong suspicion that my selection by the *jogee* to die for my people was prompted, as much by hatred as religion. But I did not give expression to my thoughts ; it would have been useless ; indeed, considered sacrilegious to do so. Strange to say, although every green thing had been scorched and withered up by the drought, I was provided with fresh garlands to wear. The cattle were dying in thousands for want of food, yet I was furnished with plenty of new milk. If I went near a neighbour's house I was entreated to enter, under the belief that in doing so a blessing and good luck would result to the inmates.

“The week's grace allowed me at last came to an end. As I stood face to face with my doom and looked out upon the panic-stricken village, the forsaken fields, across which whirled mocking pillars of dust, and the merciless sky, like a canopy of red hot steel, gleaming and glowing, over a parched and desolate land, I thought it but a poor sacrifice to die under such circumstances.

“That night I was taken out to a mangoe *tope* near the temple and made the leader of a small procession, which with *dholes* beating and *sankhs* sounding, moved slowly towards the abode of the goddess Kali. When the procession arrived at the temple the young new moon could be seen distinctly behind its highest pinnacle. The omen was hailed on all sides with an audible expression of delight ! Inside the temple the gloom was deep and dismal to a degree. There was only one torch burning dimly in a recess, and an instinctive horror crept over me as



I entered the place. When my eyes became accustomed to the darkness I observed six stout posts of uneven lengths placed in a semicircle in front of the goddess. These six posts partly surrounded another larger and stronger post supported by a wooden platform which moved on wheels like a miniature *ruth* or car. The *jogee* now came forward and addressing the spectators said: This sacrifice must on no account fail, therefore, I have so arranged everything, that no human hand is to decapitate a victim; all was profound silence. We, the victims, were made to kneel and deposit our garlands at the feet of the goddess while the *jogee* laid on our necks a long curved *dhao* elaborately chased and ornamented. An involuntary shudder passed over me as I felt the cold steel. I was kneeling on the left of the idol or towards the sunrise, but the *jogee* on noticing this changed my position to the right, observing as he did so, 'The best must be reserved for the last!' I was then bound firmly to one of the six posts. I could just move my head, but that was all that was necessary.

"The *jogee* then took the *dhao*, and I thought that with such a weapon, if properly wielded, any man could take off the head of a bullock at a single blow, let alone the heads of a few youths and maidens! Moving to the centre stake or pillar the *jogee* inserted the handle of the weapon in a notch evidently prepared to receive it. The *ruth* was then set in motion and the blade flew round with a fierce swish, that made me shiver! The consciousness that death was so near at hand struck me with a sudden fear; a maddening agonising fear that brought out a cold perspiration over my whole body. The maidens were either braver than the youths or cared less for life, for they never looked up once, but stood like statues, beauti-



ful in their modesty, waiting their fate ! They were the first to suffer ! The *ruth* was so placed that it ran between two lines of wood, about one cubit in rear of the sacrificial posts, this arrangement caused the blade to describe one harmless revolution between each victim. When all was ready a Brahmin held a wet cloth above the head of the first victim, and at a given signal, discharged a few drops of water from it. This caused the maiden to raise her head in a startled way and the moment she did so, the *ruth* flew round and sent her head, at a single bound, to the feet of the goddess ! Then followed a wild and maddening shriek of horror as we gazed at the quivering and headless trunk tied to the post ! But the sound of the *dholes* and trumpets drowned our cries, and the Brahmins induced us to bow our heads once more. Then followed another revolution of the *ruth* and another head bounded to the feet of the blood-thirsty goddess ; and so on until the fifth victim had been decapitated. Then there was a pause, followed by great confusion amongst the spectators. A cry was raised that the police were at hand and the crowd, panic-stricken, melted away like a wind torn mist. The *jogee* in despair yelled at the top of his voice ‘Kali ! Kali ! the last, the last, only one remains and you will have your rites ; the sacrifice shall not fail, or I lose my life in the attempt !’ In obedience to his cry the Brahmins set the *ruth* in motion once more. I now heard a great cry outside the temple, and believing relief was at hand, I was seized with a wild and desperate craving for life. Planting my feet firmly against the stake to which I was tied I wrenched myself backwards with all my might and in this act just escaped the blade of the *ruth* ! But the next moment I was felled by a blow on the head and my long and terrible agony was

ended! When I came to myself it was daylight; my head was bound up, and at a little distance I saw some policemen talking solemnly over something on the ground. It was the dead body of the *jogee*. It appeared that in his effort to prevent my escaping he fell a victim to his own diabolical invention, the blade of the *ruth* nearly cut him in two!

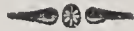
“In consequence of the timely notice the people had of the arrival of the police the crowd had time to disperse before any arrests were made. When the *sahibs* with a body of police entered the temple the only living soul discovered was myself, and I was insensible and could afford them no clue to the parties responsible for the deaths of five innocent youths and maidens. A search was made in the neighbourhood, but all the villages around were found deserted. In consequence of the injuries I had sustained, I was not very carefully watched and managed to make good my escape from hospital, in order to avoid implicating my kinsmen and giving evidence against them. Strange to say, I had not proceeded far before I was seized by a gang of my own tribesmen, who had been on the watch for an opportunity to rescue me from the hands of the police, and hurried away to a place of concealment. The question was debated whether I was to die or not. The majority decided, that as the sacrifice had failed, and the *jogee* was dead there was no advantage to be gained by putting me to death by violence. The crime might be discovered and lead to detection and punishment. But as my life was forfeited to Kali I could not be set at liberty. I was, therefore, blindfolded and taken into the heart of a dense jungle, tied to a tree and left to perish by starvation. Fortunately the hemp cord with which I was bound to the tree passed over a small hole where two

squirrels had taken up their domicile and they cut the string during the night to effect an exit. On the approach of daylight, finding myself at liberty, I turned my steps towards Oudh, in the disguise of a *jogee*. In Oudh there is a branch of my own tribe, who, many years ago, were compelled to embrace the Moslem faith. I made my way to their chief and voluntarily embraced the profession of Islam. Finding, after a time, I was but coldly received, I fled from the place, and, after many wanderings, joined a band of dacoits, ~~under the leadership of the renowned~~  
~~Abdoole.~~

+ ultimately  
 and afterwards  
 became its leader.



## CHAPTER II.



## DACOITY.

ABDOOLA KHAN was a notorious dacoit leader, and a fugitive from justice. He had a large following, all men of courage and daring like himself. The head-quarters of Abdoola Khan's band was situated on the slope of a range of hills, well within the borders of an independent native State. Here he was perfectly secure and free from molestation so long as he and his men abstained from plunder in the Rajah's territory. Indeed, it was on these conditions only he was permitted to occupy his mountain home. Abdoola's band made periodical raids into British territory and always returned laden with *loot*. I was received in a most amicable manner by the whole band, for my strength and activity made me a valuable acquisition to the fraternity. The chief himself undertook to initiate me, and teach me the stratagems of the profession, which, however, I was called on to put ni



practice before my tuition had progressed very far. But I was an apt pupil and soon learned the business.

Preparations had been going on for about a month previous to my joining the dacoits to *loot* a prosperous village in British territory about eight miles across the border. The head man of the village had either been privately informed of, or suspected our designs, and had in consequence induced the authorities to strengthen a police outpost on our line of route. Our chief had heard of this counter move and a council of war was held to devise some stratagem to checkmate the police. I suggested that one of our number—the lightest man of the band, should be tied down upon a *charpoy* (cot) under the pretence of having hydrophobia, and carried on our shoulders past the police outpost. The arms of the party could be concealed by the same means, as the police would be very careful in approaching a man suffering from such a terrible affliction. This stratagem was agreed to without a single dissenting voice, and I rose at once in the estimation of the chief and his men. I was known amongst the fraternity ever after as the “ingenuity man.”

The night selected for the adventure arrived. As arranged, one of the party was lashed down in a *charpoy* with all the arms and covered over with a *sutranjee* which was also tied down. This done the cot was hoisted on the shoulders of four men and borne off, followed by the remainder of the band disguised as cultivators. On nearing the police outpost we were challenged by the man on duty. In reply to his enquiries we told him that the man in the *charpoy* was suffering from hydrophobia and that we were taking him to a celebrated *jogee* who resided in a village some distance off (the one, in fact, we were going to *loot*!) to have him cured of the distemper. Here the

patient became very violent and barked like a dog, and we were told to get him out of the way as speedily as possible. So we continued our journey without further molestation till we approached the doomed village. When we were again challenged by the watchman. We told him the same story as we had told at the police outpost, and asked the way to the house of the *jogee*. As the watchman turned to lead the way one of our men threw a *gumsha* over his head from behind and gagged him. Two others caught him by the hands and feet and tied him up so that he could neither speak nor move. He was then taken off the road and concealed behind a straw stack. The watchman having been put out of the road and quietly disposed of, we released the man from the *charpoy*, and armed ourselves for action. Before, however, commencing operations we placed a man at each outlet from the village to prevent any of the inhabitants escaping to inform the police.

When all the arrangements necessary to ensure the success of the enterprise were completed, we commenced operations on the premises of the wealthiest man in the village—the money-lender or banker. We had just succeeded in forcing the door when he made his appearance, and seeing a number of armed men, rightly concluded the nature of our business. So without more ado he dropped on his knees and bowing his head till his face touched the ground begged to assure “my lords that they were welcome to his poor tenement and as the night was far advanced supposed the travellers would like something to eat and drink and a place to rest till morning.” But his honied speech produced very little impression on a band of dacoits. For our chief immediately ordered the banker to be gagged while two men were sent into the

zenana to keep the women quiet. In a moment the whole house, though breaking into an uproar, quieted down so that you could hear a pin drop. "Now," said the chief, addressing the money-lender, "we are not come here to beg for what you choose to give us, but to take all that we can find worth carrying away." "My lord," replied the money-lender, touching the ground again with his forehead, "I'm a very poor man, have mercy on me!" "Put on the thumb screw," said the chief to one of his men. "I see we'll have to squeeze it out of him." The instruments of torture were accordingly produced, but the very sight of them had the desired effect. The money-lender looking at the chief appealingly begged to be released from his bonds and he would lead their lordships to where he kept his treasure. His request was complied with; and he took us into an inner room, and opening a large iron box brought out about three thousand rupees worth of gold and silver ornaments which had been deposited with him as security for money lent. "Take this," he said to the chief pointing to the treasure, "I'm a ruined man! That's all I have in the world!" and he emphasised the words by calling upon all his gods to bear witness that he spoke the truth. "It wont do," returned the chief, "we want money as well as jewellery." The banker joined his hand and pleaded for mercy, alleging that all his money was lent out on interest. The chief shook his head with a gesture of incredulity and called for the thumb screws. This argument was irresistible. The money-lender yielded rather than submit to an acquaintance with the instruments of torture and pointed out where the rupees were buried. The treasure was unearthed in a jiffy and taken possession of. We did not remain to count it, but judging by its weight we



concluded the amount was not under four thousand rupees. "Come boys," said the chief, addressing his men, "time flies and there is lots of work yet before us. We have pretty well cleared out our old friend the banker and so will bid him a very good night.' Then turning to the money-lender the chief continued: "Sorry old fellow that other engagements prevents us accepting your kind hospitality; but you may serve us in another way, don't make a row over this matter and rouse your neighbours. Remember we are masters of the village." The victim reluctantly promised compliance and groaning inwardly for the loss of his property, began to beat his forehead with his hands after the manner of Orientals when suffering from extreme mental agony. So leaving one of our party to prevent the money-lender raising an alarm we proceeded to the next most important house in the village, the liquor vendor. These two men had managed to enrich themselves on the poverty and dissipation of their neighbours, and their spoliation, therefore, excited little sympathy in the village.

We met with no opposition or remonstrance in breaking into the house of the spirit vendor, and were not a little surprised to find, after exploring the premises, that all the men had mysteriously disappeared. The women were discovered huddled together in a corner crying, and in their terror, were holding on to one another like grim death! We succeeded after a little persuasion in pacifying them. Then our chief enquired where the men were. One of the women with apparent reluctance, pointed to a man perched on a cross beam of the roof. He was had down in a jiffy. But on being asked to point out where the money was kept, assured the chief that he did not belong to the house, but was himself a burglar who had

come to steal, and on hearing the dacoits breaking open the door had mounted to the cross beam of the roof in hopes of escaping detection. Of course nobody believed this story, and the chief ordered an application of the thumb screws until he was made to change his tune. But the poor fellow fainted from the effects of the torture, still persisting that he was a stranger to the place. It then occurred to our chief that probably the man might be telling the truth, and a closer search was made of the premises, which resulted in the discovery of the real Simon Pure. He was concealed under the bed. When dragged out of his hiding place, more dead than alive with terror, and ordered to disgorge his ill-gotten wealth, he did so without a murmur. He had been an eye-witness of the torture the burglar had suffered and rightly concluded that resistance would be useless. Before leaving the house our chief presented the liquor vendor's wife with a gold bangle, in admiration of her clever tact and ingenuity in trying to shield her husband. She had seen the burglar mount to his hiding place when the noise of armed men were heard forcing open the door, and notwithstanding the terror and sense of danger to which she must have been reduced, had the presence of mind, in a critical moment, to take advantage of the circumstance to save her husband. The incident produced a lasting impression on every member of our band.

As it was now past 3 A. M. we thought it advisable to be making tracks. So collecting our men we made for the spot where the *charpoy* was concealed. Here a council of war was held to decide how we were to return to our mountain home without exciting the suspicion of the frontier police. I was called upon to exercise my ingenuity once more. But just at this particular juncture, what

with the work and excitement of the last three hours, I felt myself quite out of form for devising stratagems; and said so. The chief suggested a smoke would clear my brain, and ordered one of the men to prepare the *hubble-bublē*. I accordingly sat down to smoke and think at the same time. A few whiffs set me all right again, so I got my wits to work and soon devised a means of escape from our present dilemma. This is what I suggested. The lightest man of the company to mount the *charpoy* as before—the arms and *loot* to be well packed around him and the whole covered over with a *sutranjee* and tied down. When challenged by the outpost, pretend that the man afflicted with hydrophobia died before reaching the residence of the *jogee*, and that being pious Hindoos we were taking the body to the bank of a holy stream in the Rajah's territory for cremation. This story will keep the inquisitive police from approaching the cot for fear of pollution, and they will hurry us away. If we told the public guardians of life and property that the *jogee* effected a cure, they might be curious enough to want to see the man, and possibly examine him. This would not do. But a corpse they will not approach on any consideration. The plan was agreed to and proved a success. When all was ready for a start the *charpoy* was hoisted on the shoulders of four men and the funeral procession moved off. Two men in advance of the pretended corpse and the remainder in rear, calling out, Hurry Bole! Hurry Bole! Ram Sunkur Hurry Bole! As anticipated, the man on duty at the police outpost on learning the nature of the procession ordered us to keep as far away from the thana as possible. This we did, but not without a pretended grumble at being turned off the Queen's highway and out of our direct road. Having passed the British outposts




we were never questioned again during the remainder of our journey. On reaching our mountain home, which we did just as the glorious orb of day was making his appearance above the horizon, and comparing notes, the result of the night's adventure was found little short of fifteen thousand rupees! "Not a bad haul for one cast, boys!" Our chief remarked as he stood contemplating the pile of treasure. "And now let us from labour to refreshment." Never were orders more promptly and heartily complied with. Hitherto, the excitement and success of the venture had made us forget the wants of nature, and now that it was over, we felt both hungry and fatigued. So after a hearty meal, hastily prepared, most of us retired to rest for the remainder of the day. By evening exaggerated accounts of the dacoity had spread, like wild fire, all over the district. Two European police superintendents had been deputed to the spot to make enquiries. The watchman of the village, who had been gagged and tied up, told the *sahibs* that the dacoits numbered over a hundred armed men. This exaggerated story threw the police for a time completely off the scent, as Abdoola Khan's band was known to not exceed twenty-five all told. Then commenced a searching investigation as to how the dacoits had entered and left the village. It was rightly concluded that such a large body of men could not travel far through a thickly populated district without having been seen or heard by some one. The watchmen of the different villages for miles around were questioned, but no information was elicited calculated to support the statement of the guardian of the pillaged village. All that the European police superintendents could learn, was that about eleven o'clock at night a party of not more than eight men passed the outpost on the main road lead-

ing from the Rajah's territory to the village where the dacoity took place carrying a man suffering from hydrophobia on a cot. When questioned by the constable on duty the party said they were taking the patient to the *jogee* for treatment and that the same party returned about four o'clock in the morning without effecting their purpose, the man having died before reaching the residence of the *jogee*. Here the police misled, for a time, their European superiors as much by suppressing the actual number of men that passed and repassed their outpost during the night as the watchman, who was gagged and fettered, exaggerated the strength of the party in the first instance.

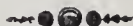
At last the enquiring officers were obliged to give up the matter in despair. The *darogah* in charge of the outpost nearest the village in which the dacoity took place was reduced and transferred to another thana, and the matter dropped. Our chief, after a short consultation with his men, decided that it would not be prudent to venture across the border for at least another month to come. In the meantime, as we had the means, he ventured to suggest that steps should be taken to make the time pass pleasantly. Accordingly, arrangements were made to get up a party of musicians and dancing girls from the city and make fleet the time in innocent enjoyment. Every man of the band hailed the proposal with a ringing cheer of delight! So we had a grand *nautch*, which lasted for a whole week, and was attended by most of the officials of the State. The Dewan lent us the Rajah's *shamiana* for the occasion.

When we got tired of the music and dancing, a proposal was made, and universally subscribed to, that every man of the band should relate his antecedents and the

circumstances under which he was induced to become a dacoit. The chief opened the entertainment with the first story.



## CHAPTER III.



## THE CHIEF'S STORY.

I AM a native of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. When I was a lad of some eighteen summers I went out on a hunting expedition to the Black Mountains. A son of the chief of my clan was one of the party. On rounding the spur of a hill a magnificent buck suddenly sprang out of some low brushwood. The young prince and I, like a flash of lightning, raised our bows, covered the animal and shot at the same moment. The buck rolled over pierced through the heart with a single arrow. I claimed the buck; but the son of my chief disputed the claim on the ground that the arrow that brought it down flew from his bow. A quarrel ensued over the matter and I stabbed the youth to the heart. Knowing that I must suffer death by the hand of some one of the family whose relative I had killed, if caught, I fled into the jungle. The chief and all his household immediately started in pursuit



of the murderer of his child, and no pains or toil were spared to try and ferret me out, but without success. I eluded their vigilance and escaped detection for nearly a year. At last the old chief, worn out with fatigue and burning to avenge the death of his son, looked about for some blood relation of mine on whom he could satisfy the desire of a clansman's heart for vengeance, pounced upon my decrepit old father, and two brothers. On learning this resolve, for I was kept informed by friends of all that was going on and being done to effect my capture, I sent in word that on the day fixed for the execution of my relations I would present myself in person and meet death like a true clansman rather than another, even a stranger, should suffer for my crime. The chief received this intelligence with manifest delight, for it was humiliating to his position that the murderer of his son should be at large and in the enjoyment of his freedom, though obliged to keep out of the way. So the glad tidings of great joy that I was coming in to atone for the life of his child was communicated to the whole clan. The day fixed for my execution arrived and all the people assembled on the plain outside the village. Precisely at twelve o'clock I bounded into the ring formed by the clan. Immediately a shout of triumph went up from the chief and his relatives. My own people covered their faces with their hands and deplored my fate in a wild chant after the manner of our people on such occasions. I sat down in the centre of the ring, and taking out my flint and steel struck a light and smoked in silence. Every eye was fixed upon me.

At length I arose and, addressing the chief, said:—"I killed your son, he was a young and daring spirit like myself. He did me no wrong, he was the friend and

companion of my youth. I cut him down in a fit of ungovernable passion. I am very sorry for it; and I deserve to die. Then turning to the eldest brother of the deceased, I drew the knife from my waist, and throwing it down before him,—said: ‘There is the weapon that drank the blood of your brother; take it and like a brave man avenge his death.’ Having thus delivered myself in the midst of profound silence, I immediately began to bare my breast and meet my fate. The chief’s eldest son rose to his feet, spat upon his hand, and clenching the knife with a deadly grasp stood with uplifted arm ready for the word of command to plunge it into my heart. My kinsmen turned their faces towards Mecca and offered up a prayer to the Most High to receive my spirit. The chief and his adherents opposed the pious act and proclaimed that any show of sympathy towards the murderer of his son would be resented and severely punished. Whereupon my elder brother stung to the quick at the chief’s inhuman mandate sprang upon the man appointed to be my executioner and cut him down. Then ensued a terrible hand to hand fight with naked knives. As the chief’s party was the strongest in number all my kinsmen were completely annihilated in less time than it takes me to relate the story. I alone escaped. And having no one now to die for, fled a second time to the jungle, and ultimately into British territory.

I made my way to Nuddea, a district in Bengal, and took service at the Katlamaree Indigo Factory, then under the superintendence of a man named Young. There was another indigo concern in the same neighbourhood called the Apoorree Factory, managed by one Richard Aimes, commonly called by the natives “Dick Sahib.” There were continual disputes between the managers of these

two factories about indigo land and other matters. Young was a man of a cruel and ferocious disposition, and had frequently got into trouble by his brutality. If any of the wretched ryots had the misfortune to offend him in any way he was immediately seized, carried to the factory and branded with the irons used in stamping the factory mark on the cakes of manufactured indigo. He was also of a very jealous disposition, and easily provoked to acts of violence.

I had been in the service of this man about a year when I made the acquaintance of the daughter of a neighbouring ryot named Anund. As there were two unmarried girls in the village of the same name my enamorata was called fair Anund, to distinguish her from the other Anund who was of a darker complexion. I grew to be passionately fond of the girl and intended to make her my wife. In this, however, I was disappointed. The fame of her beauty reached the ears of "Dick Sahib." He crossed my path and robbed me of my jewel. A deep and deadly hatred of the Englishman entered my heart and I swore by the holy prophet to exact a terrible revenge. An opportunity offered in the frequent quarrels and incessant war carried on between the managers of the two factories and their respective retainers, I spread a report to the effect that "Dick Sahib" was making overtures to my master's mistress through one of his minions. This report insidiously circulated soon reached the ears of Mr. Young. I was questioned on the matter and with apparent reluctance admitted that one of "Dick Sahib's" servants had endeavoured to bribe me into aiding and abetting the intrigue by a promise of higher wages and superior service. My master's "dander" was up at once. This conversation took place in the forenoon. By sundown Young



had all his retainers mustered in the factory compound armed with spears and *latties*. Shortly afterwards Young appeared himself, mounted on a fine chestnut horse, and placing himself at the head of his men bore down on the Apooree Factory.

Dick Sahib had just returned from an inspection of his crops and was seated smoking in the verandah of his residence with fair Anund at his feet, when Young's band of "free lances" broke through the fence which surrounded the house and rushed into the compound.

Though the surprise was quite unexpected, Dick jumped up to meet his assailants and struggled desperately with his foes, while fair Anund flung her arms round him shrieking aloud for mercy! Mad with jealousy and burning for revenge, I discharged my lance at the pair. It missed the man, but struck the woman on the forehead, inflicting a ghastly wound, and she fell to the ground insensible. Dick was then overpowered by superior numbers and dragged from the house in the midst of a shower of blows from bamboos and bludgeons. When clear of the compound he was laid down for the purpose of having his legs tied preparatory to removing him to the Katlamaree Factory. He was groaning and moaning dreadfully. Having secured him with ropes two men got hold of his legs and two by the arms and bore him away in triumph, his body swinging in an arc between them. Young rode at the head of the procession and encouraged his men in this act of villainy. It was a bright moonlight night and the surrounding landscape was bathed in silver spangles, but we had no eye then for the beauties of nature. We were too intent on a deed of darkness to notice anything else besides. The light, however, which we disregarded, enabled a couple of startled cowherds, and a cultivator who had been guarding



his crops, to watch our proceedings. Suspecting that some deed of violence was being perpetrated, they silently crept up as close to the procession as they could, with due regard to their own safety. Concealing themselves in the shadow of a rude embankment these men silently witnessed all that was going on. A servant in the employ of the victim also followed our party at a respectful distance, determined to see, to the bitter end, the fate of his master.

Watched and followed thus, Young and his men carried their victim, shouting as they proceeded. "*Hurry bol ! hurry bol ! Sheeb sunker, hurry bol !*" (literally "shout Sheeb Sunker hurry," the name of a Hindoo idol—an exclamation of triumph) "the breath has left the body of Dick Sahib." Arriving at the door of Young's tent, he was then living in a tent pitched in the factory compound as his house was under repairs, Dick was thrown down on the ground and belaboured a second time with iron bound *latties*. He uttered not a word. My plot of revenge was nearing its consummation. I determined to add the last straw that breaks the camel's back. I jumped on the chest of my enemy and stamped and trampled on his breast till his tongue was forced an inch beyond his teeth. At this time Young had gone to bring the branding irons, and on his return I said to him:—"Sahib, it is now useless. Dick is dead." "Great God" exclaimed Young, throwing down the branding irons; "what's to be done?", "Send the people away," replied I; "the body must be disposed of." Accordingly the body was brought into the tent and the people about dispersed to their homes. When all was quiet and the night far advanced, we carried the body of our victim to a *nullah* some distance from the factory intending to bury it. But finding a dead horse near the spot changed our minds, and after disembowelling the

animal, stowed away the corpse in the body of the horse. As it was lying in a hollow we had only to cover it over with earth to conceal it from view. This done, Young returned to his tent and I to the factory. The following morning we were told that Dick Sahib's servants were searching for their master all night. Fair Anund had recovered her senses and got her wound dressed. She then started in company of one of Dick's retainers, for the Keshubnuggur Factory, for the purpose of reporting to the proprietor of the Apooree Estate, Thomas Sahib, what had occurred. The latter, on hearing the particulars of the outrage, rode over at once to the Apooree Concern, and after making some preliminary enquiries, informed the Magistrate of the district. A searching enquiry was then instituted. The Magistrate went in person to the Katlamaree Factory and questioned Young's servants. He might just as well have stayed at home. For Young's retainers would just as soon have thought of declaring war against the Government of India as of placing themselves in a position of hostility to their terrible and dreaded master by revealing what took place. The Magistrate had therefore to depend on his own judgment, tact, and experience of the native character, in his efforts to solve the mystery in connection with the disappearance of Dick Sahib. The knowledge that there were arrayed against him all the craft, duplicity and devices of a very unscrupulous man, backed by the natural cunning of his Bengalee accomplices, was not very encouraging or hopeful to the enquiring officer. The case, however, had now made a great noise in the district and every effort was made to unearth the victim. The jungle for miles around was searched by a large body of police, tanks were dragged and fresh ploughed land was probed, but without

success so far. At last the police stumbled on the spot where the carcass of the horse had been buried. The ground appeared to have been recently disturbed and a party of constables were ordered to explore the spot. They had not proceeded more than a cubit below the surface, when a dreadful stench assailed their olfactory nerves. Inspired by the promise of success which this offered, they redoubled their exertions, and at last one of the constables brought up a piece of red hair on the edge of his *khodal*. There was a shout of triumph, as Dick Sahib had red hair, but their tune was soon changed. On proceeding a little further they discovered that the red hair belonged to an animal and not a man! The carcass of the horse was only partly uncovered when the police in disgust and despair abandoned the search.

The police now got hold of the cowherds and cultivators who had followed the procession on the night of the murder, and on their statements Young was arrested. Seeing my master in trouble I deemed it prudent to make myself scarce. It was well I did so, for I was to have been prisoner number two. Young was no sooner deprived of his liberty than all his servants and retainers turned round upon him. They not only told the police all that had occurred, but accused him of committing the very acts of which I was alone guilty.

While Young was waiting his trial for the murder of Dick Sahib the police, in order to strengthen the case against him, got together a quantity of human bones from which a skeleton was ingeniously constructed. A lock of red human hair was also produced, said to have been taken out of a dent in the skull, probably caused by a blow from a *lattie* on the night of the murder. The barber who used to shave the unfortunate victim was produced in court to prove the hair belonged to his late master.

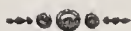
On this evidence Young, being a British born subject, was sent down to the Supreme Court at Calcutta for trial. Here the bones produced by the police were examined by an expert and found to belong partly to a male, and partly to a female subject; the shin bone of a calf being put in to make up the thigh bone of a man! On this discovery Young was acquitted, by a jury of his countrymen. The *darogah* in charge of the case and some of the native witnesses were tried on a charge of fabricating false evidence, convicted and sent to the Andamans; while I, who was not only the instigator of the outrage, but the real murderer of "Dick Sahib," my hated rival, escaped not only punishment, but even suspicion.

So here I am to-day the chief of as brave a band of dacoits as ever *looted* a village or tightened a thumb screw.

---



## CHAPTER IV.



## PEER KHAN'S STORY.

THE chief having finished his story, called upon his lieutenant, or second in command, to entertain the company with the history of his life before becoming a dacoit; whereupon, very cheerfully, he thus began:—

“My name is Peer Khan, son of Shumshur Khan. I am a descendant of an old and respectable Mahomedan family of Oudh. My father and grandfather were officers in the King of Oudh's service. In fact, all my ancestors for generations back followed the profession of arms. I was a boy of sixteen years of age when the kingdom of Oudh was annexed by the English. At this time my grandfather was an old man and had retired from the service. My father, who was still in the prime of life, followed the deposed King into exile. I remained with my people at Lucknow till I was eighteen, and then became a sepoy in the Company's service. I was serving in the 53rd Native

Infantry when the Mutiny broke out at Cawnpore. The wing of the regiment to which I was attached occupied the building known as the Old Hospital. When the disturbance began I went over to the Nana, and after making myself known to him, and expressing a wish to throw in my lot with his, was raised to the rank of captain in the rebel army then forming. On the 3rd of June 1857 the Nana sent for me. I went immediately to his quarters. He was issuing instructions to his staff when I entered. He received me very graciously and after introducing me to the officers present, said:—‘Peer Khan, you are a descendant of an old and respectable family. I know your father and grandfather well. I have sent for you on very important business, because I believe I can trust the son of so worthy a father.’ I bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment and the Nana continued:—‘You know most of the English Garrison here, I believe, at least all the principal officers. Is that so?’ I answered in the affirmative. ‘Very good. For the present it will be your special duty to watch the movements of the English and keep me well informed of all that is going on both within and without the camp. You must not expose yourself to any danger, mind, for I do not want to lose your services. I will give you a list of the native servants in the employ of the English, whom we have won over to our side, make good use of them. They can give you valuable information, as General Wheeler, who is a credulous old man, places implicit confidence in their loyalty, and sends them into the city as spies.’ After receiving my instructions I left the Nana and commenced preparations for my new duties. There was a company of Her Majesty’s 48th Regiment on duty in the entrenched camp, when I went out on the evening of the 4th of

June to take observations. This company marched the following morning for Lucknow and was relieved by another company of the same regiment. A little after sundown General Wheeler and Captain Moore of the 32nd Regiment, accompanied by several other officers, came down to the entrenched camp. The men on duty in the trenches were ordered to fall in for fatigue duty. A little later on I saw the party carrying chairs, boxes, tables, cots, hogsheads of beer and porter and place them round the two bungalows occupied by the women and children. This done, the General ordered a gun to be fired at midnight to alarm the garrison. This was the signal for a general muster, and parties were told off to guard various points. An order was then issued that all who sought admittance to the garrison were to be allowed in, but none to be allowed out. I was at first a little disconcerted on hearing this news. For some of my spies were then inside the English lines. An hour afterwards, however, I was delighted to see a number of natives issuing from the camp, and amongst them the men I was anxious about. They told me that the sentry had stopped them, but on going to the General and representing that they wanted to go out to see their wives and families were permitted to do so, the General himself coming down to the sentry to pass them out. There were amongst the number some twenty Jullindars, who, on passing through the cavalry lines, took possession of a horse each, which they made over to the Nana's men on reaching the rebel camp. This was made the occasion for great cheering amongst the sepoys.

After the cheering had subsided, I noticed that all the sentinels outside the English garrison were drawn in and the General ordered the artillery to fire into the rebel

camp. Which was done, and warmly responded to on the other side. The Commissariat stores were soon demolished and the garrison left without provisions. I noticed also that the only well from which a supply of water could be obtained was outside the lines and could only be approached at the risk of life. The English garrison were consequently soon reduced to starvation point. Dead horseflesh was actually served out to men, women and children as rations.

On the 27th of June a woman with two children attempted to escape from the famished garrison. They were discovered and brought to the Nana by our sepoy. The woman told the Nana to what straits the garrison was reduced for want of food, water, and ammunition. The Nana then wrote a letter to General Wheeler and made the woman carry it back to camp, keeping the two children till she returned with a reply. The letter ran as follows:—General Wheeler. I know your provisions and ammunition must be nearly exhausted. I do not want to injure the ladies and children, if you can make up your mind to surrender at discretion. I await your reply ?' After the General had read the letter he went round the parapet and conversed with his soldiers. He was crying at the time for the loss of his son who had a few minutes previously been killed by a cannon ball. It burst through the wall of the bungalow where the General and his family had been seated conversing and struck the boy. 'It is not for my own life I care one fig' said the old General, the tears rolling down his cheeks as big as peas, 'but the fate of the brave men and helpless women and children who look up to me for direction and guidance that exercise my thoughts. Here I am weak as a woman's tear.' Then arose a murmur of sympathy from the trenches for



the kind-hearted old General, and a hundred voices cried, 'No surrender!' on such terms as the Nana had offered. A reply to this effect was despatched to the Nana. Towards evening another letter was received from the Nana modifying the terms of surrender. These were agreed to. Arrangements were then made to send four officers to a place appointed by the Nana to sign the treaty. A tent was pitched for the purpose about four hundred yards from the entrenched camp. The terms of the treaty ran as follows:— 'That all the European garrison, men, women and children, with the exception of any officer, soldier or civilian, who served under Lord Dalhousie's government, should be sent in safety by boat to Allahabad on General Wheeler making over to the Nana all the treasure, and munitions of war at his disposal'.

It turned out that there was only one man in the garrison who had served under Lord Dalhousie and he was at the time down with small-pox; so no notice was taken of him.

That evening it was notified in orders that two officers would proceed to the river and make all necessary arrangements for the journey by boat to Allahabad. The officers detailed for this duty were Captain Whitney of the Artillery and Captain Turner of the Infantry. These officers were permitted to perform their duty and return to garrison without molestation. That evening all hands were warned to be ready to march to the ghat at daylight the next day under an escort furnished by the Nana. In the meantime the mutineers had instructions to get the guns into position on the bank of the river opposite to where the British would embark, but under cover, so that they would not be noticed until the time for action arrived. When all was ready the

garrison received orders to start. The escort consisted of six troops of cavalry and two regiments of infantry, about two thousand six hundred men all told. On the way to the ghat the Nana gave me the names of certain ladies, amongst them the daughter of General Wheeler, with instructions to detain them on the bank till after all the others had embarked. This was to be done under pretence that a covered boat had been provided for them, and was expected to arrive every moment. The Nana's object was to get all the men and officers on board the boats, open fire upon them and when completely annihilated appropriate the ladies. But our ignorance of English etiquette frustrated the Nana's plans. The officers refused to enter the boats until the ladies were first provided with accommodation. So after waiting for some time, and finding no covered boat for the ladies arrive, they were put into open boats and followed by the officers. The signal was then given for the guns to open fire on the boats. This was done. Twelve guns charged with grape and cannister belched forth death and destruction. The firing was kept up as fast as the guns could be loaded and discharged; the scene on the river beggars description! Some of the boats caught fire and men, women and children jumped over overboard and were picked off by the infantry on shore. The river for miles was red with the blood of the victims. In the smoke, noise, and confusion, two of the boats drifted down the river with the current unnoticed. A party of sepoys was told off to follow them, with strict orders that none were to escape. When the sepoys came up with the boats, all the Englishmen who could swim took to the water. The boats soon after stranded on a sandbank and those who remained in them were soon dispatched. The men who took to the

river, about twenty-five or thirty in number, however, gave a lot of trouble. They were followed for days and three or four actually succeeded in making good their escape. The remainder were either shot or devoured by crocodiles.

The men who took to the water stripped and left their clothes behind them in the boats. From the clothes we were able to ascertain the names of a few of the men who endeavoured to escape by swimming. These were Captain Whitney, Lieutenants Fagan, Thompson, and De'Lafosse, Corporal O'Keefe, Gunner Sullivan and W. Murphy.

The Nana was told, and believed, that every man, woman and child of the English garrison were accounted for.

That night there was a terrible row in camp amongst the sepoys and sowars over the *loot* taken from the victims.

The Nana was in a terrible rage when he heard that the stratagem for saving the ladies failed. I was blamed for mismanaging the whole affair and put under arrest.

The day after the slaughter of the English garrison news was brought to the Nana that a European lady and gentleman—supposed to be the Deputy Commissioner and his wife—the latter a very handsome woman—had rode in from the interior of the district in hopes of meeting General Wheeler. But on hearing the fate of the English garrison had taken shelter in a house in the city where they intended to remain till nightfall when they would slip quietly away. The Nana sent for me and said, 'Look here, Peer Khan, you made a terrible muddle yesterday of the business I intrusted you with. There is a chance now of your recovering your character and



freedom. I have just been informed that a European lady and gentleman have taken shelter in a house in the city that will be pointed out to you. Take a company of sepoy and a troop of sowars with you and bring in the fugitives alive and you are restored to my favour and your post again.' I promised to do my best and left the Nana to make the necessary preparations. When all was ready I started for the house indicated by the informer. On nearing the place I halted the troops for fear of exciting alarm and proceeded alone to the house. The gentleman, after some little delay, consented to see me. I told him that the Nana had heard of his arrival and desired an interview. He left me saying he would consult with his wife and then give me a reply. He was absent nearly half an hour. When he returned he told me that after talking the matter over with his wife they had decided not to see the Nana. I saw persuasion would be of no use, so ordered up the troops and surrounded the house. This show of force only made the Englishman more obstinate. He placed himself at the head of a narrow staircase, and coolly told me that he defied the Nana and all the forces at his command. Nettled at this insolence I ordered a dozen of men to mount the stairs and secure him. A rush was made for the purpose. The Englishman fired half a dozen of shots in quick succession and the narrow passage was blocked with dead bodies. I then called off my men, and after consulting with a brother officer, decided upon setting fire to the building. 'This' I remarked, 'will place the lady's life in jeopardy and make the saucy Englishman yield. I then gave orders for the sepoy to fill the lower room with straw from the compound. Immediately the gentleman saw our intentions he turned to his wife, and after a passionate embrace shot her through



the heart, then drawing his sword he jumped down the stairs at a single bound and before my men had time to recover from their surprise, a dozen of them lay prostrate on the floor. The Englishman was ultimately shot, but his death cost us twenty-five lives. I determined, however, to carry out my purpose of setting the house on fire and to tell the Nana that I was forced on to this measure owing to the obstinacy of the Englishman, and the danger and difficulty of approaching him, owing to the narrow staircase. Before setting the match, however, I went upstairs to where his wife lay dead on the floor. There was a small hand bag by the side of the body which I opened and found to contain gold mohurs, and valuable ornaments. These I appropriated. I also stripped the body of all the trinkets I could find, including a gold watch and chain. With this property in my possession, and knowing the reception I was likely to receive from the Nana when he heard the expedition had failed, I determined to make for my home and people at Lucknow. I consequently ordered the senior officer to march the troops back to their lines and I would stay and see the dead disposed of before making my report to the Nana. The moment the troops had disappeared, I disguised myself as a religious mendicant and started for Lucknow. When I came in view of the city it only wanted an hour of sunrise. Here I was challenged by a picket that was located in a mangoe tope. I told the sentry I was a religious mendicant. He said that the rate at which I was getting over the ground and my general appearance belied my calling, and I was taken to the naik in charge on suspicion of being a spy. On searching my person for letters, the money and jewellery were found. I told the naik I was the servant of a European who escaped to Allahabad, leaving his house and property.

And that I helped myself to the money and articles found in my wallets. After a short consultation with the men of the picket, the naik proposed that I should either be taken to the officer in command or share the booty equally with the picket, and say nothing about the matter. I consented to the latter alternative, well knowing that if I was taken to the officer in command I would not only lose all, but possibly get into trouble also. The picket consisted of twelve men and the naik, which, including myself, made fourteen. I consequently left the mangoe tope with only one-fourteenth of the property I had when I started. My family resided between the Yellow Bungalow and the Fort so I made straight for the spot. Guess my surprise when I found the house levelled to the ground and my people gone! No one could give me any information of what had become of them. So I wandered about till my money was all spent. Afraid to enter territory where the English Raj still held sway or meet a regiment or company of mutineers in case I were recognised. In this dilemma I was driven to join a band of dacoits”!

NOTE.—We trust the lesson that this chapter teaches will not be thrown away upon Englishmen in India. Had every man of General Wheeler’s little band acted as the civilian did, what a different account history would have had to record of the Cawnpore Mutiny!

The author of these stories was employed some ten years after the Cawnpore massacre in collecting evidence in connection with the State trials at Allahabad. He had therefore an opportunity of picking up facts and gaining information that were not available when the *History of the Indian Mutiny* was written.

---

## CHAPTER V.



## THE PATHAN'S STORY.

PEER KHAN having finished his very interesting story, which delighted the company exceedingly, the chief next called upon Shahzada Mir to continue their entertaining pastime by a relation of his antecedents before becoming a dacoit. Accordingly Shahzada Mir, thus appealed to, immediately began to speak in this manner:

I am a Pathan by birth, breeding, and caste. I follow in the footsteps of my ancestors, read the Koran, honour the Prophet and pray for the extermination of the infidel. I do not wash my face once in a month nor my body in a lifetime; my head has never known a comb, and my sheepskin is as old as Mathusala. No savage half human is so dirty, and none so shameless in vice. Love, affection, and humanity are feelings unknown to me. Plunder and blood exercise my thoughts by day and my dreams by night. The moment I was able to comprehend, my mother

taught me what families I was to hate, and before I had reached my teens, my father taught me how to kill. My experience of life has been one continued death struggle of tribe against central authority, feud of clan with clan, village with village, family with family, and brother with brother. In half the hamlets around me there was a perpetual blood score always open, and amongst my own neighbours a private reckoning to settle. And when there is no one else to quarrel with, friends and relations will quarrel amongst themselves, and disagreements of this kind amongst Pathans means bloodshed. Other races may be blood-thirsty and treacherous, but they have some regard for their own people. The Pathan when angered would as soon kill a brother as a stranger. What wonder then that generations of such existence has brutalised my people! We can only boast of one single virtue—hospitality. Fickle we are as a race, I admit; untrustworthy, prone to shed blood for small injuries, constitutionally blind to the rights of property; dead alike to the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice. I do not believe that the world's history can show a record of a state of things such as prevail, as common and everyday occurrences, in Afghanistan. I am the only man of my tribe that has lived to see his thirtieth birthday. I never had a male relative who died in his bed. In Afghanistan no hill man pays the slightest attention to an order issued by his chief unless it is enforced by arms or fits in with his own inclination. In his immediate district a Pathan prince may secure obedience by force, but beyond a day's march from his castle any clansman will resist his authority if he thinks fit. His commands are weighed and criticised and if disapproved, treated with contempt.

Now that you have had an insight into my early his-



tory and youthful surroundings, the circumstances under which I have been, “not *made*, but *moulded*” you will not be surprised at what is to follow.

In the early Spring of 1841 an English army invaded Afghanistan. I was a young man, scarcely eighteen at the time, but strong and active. The news of an invading army filled all our hearts with delight. It promised plenty of excitement and lots of *loot*. We had no intention of joining the fighting ranks of either side or taking any part in the impending struggle. Soldiering don't pay, at least in Afghanistan. Our intention was to follow the invading army, at a respectful distance, pick off stragglers, just for the fun of the thing, and watch an opportunity to “loot” the baggage and transport animals. This we called the profitable part of the enterprise.

In order not to lose an opportunity of making hay while the sun shone, we met the advancing army at the head of the Bolan Pass. The force consisted of English infantry, European artillery and native cavalry, about ten thousand men all told including camp followers. The string of baggage camels extended from Dadur, at the foot of the Bolan Pass, to the plains of Quetta. Didn't the sight make our mouth water! The whole force encamped on the Quetta plain, one of the most lovely spots on earth without exaggeration. It is six thousand feet above the level of the sea. It is covered with verdure of the brightest and most varied kind. The ground is not flat, but mostly undulating. Irrigation, both in the form of natural rivulets and small artificial canals, is plentiful. Green grass, corn, fruit trees of all kinds, and magnificent vineyards are abundant. The entire plain—some twelve miles long by eight broad—is surrounded by high hills, crowned with perpetual snow.

The climate is delightful, the natural beauty of the scenery enchanting. To crown all, what with the spread of canvas, the long lines of horses picketed in the distance, the circles of camels, the mountains of commissariat stores, the camp fires and the life and activity of the camp itself, viewed from the neighbouring hill on which we had established a point of observation put me in mind of an Eastern fairy tale. But a Pathan has no eye for the beauties of nature or art "when on marauding bent." We soon learnt that the troops would remain at Quetta for some months, as the affairs at Cabul were not then ripe for action. So we held a council of war, the result of which was an unanimous decision to commence operations at once. An opportunity was not long in presenting itself. The troops having received orders that they were to stand fast for an indefinite period, set about making themselves as comfortable as possible. Heavy baggage was unpacked, messes were formed, and a round of dinner parties inaugurated amongst the officers of the different regiments. It was during one of these dinner parties we made our first raid on the camp. The officers of the British infantry had invited the officers of all the other regiments to a *burra khana*, and while they were enjoying themselves we looted their tents of every article of value, including rifles, revolvers and ammunition. On returning through the troop lines each man mounted a horse and ~~road~~<sup>rode</sup> away to our mountain rendezvous. We had, of course, to get the sentry out of the way. This is how we managed. One of our party—a man with a smooth face and short of stature was dressed up as a woman, and sent on in advance. On coming up to the sentry—a sepoy—she pretended to have lost her way and asked the man to put her right. The sentry enquired what she

was doing in camp so late at night. She explained that she had come in the evening to sell fruit ~~for~~ the officers' *burra khana*, and the messman not having money to pay her she was detained till after dark, waiting for the return of the mess secretary. That she had been wandering about ever since trying to find the road that led to her village, but without success. So after some further conversation the sentry undertook to put her right if she consented to certain proposals which he made to her. She simulated to be shocked at the sentry's proposal, but expressed herself in such a way as to encourage the man to persist. At last yielding, with some show of reluctance, to his solicitations, she drew him away, from the camp towards a nullah, to avoid, as she explained, being surprised by some straggler about the lines. The moment the sepoy entered the nullah two of our men sprang up and knifed him before he could utter an exclamation of surprise. We then secured his rifle and ammunition.

The next morning there was terrible commotion in camp. A sentry murdered and all the officers' tents on the west side of the lines completely gutted! The General issued orders that the sentries were, in future, to be doubled. This was done. But we were equal to the occasion. We doubled the attraction and sent two men disguised as women instead of one to draw off the sentries. There was no necessity to change our tactics for no man ever returned alive to disclose the secret of how he was lured off his beat. The courts of enquiry ordered to investigate the matter came to the conclusion that the sentries must have been caught napping, and murdered on their post, and afterwards the bodies thrown into the nullah where they were discovered. The motive for the



murder was believed to be the sentries' rifles and ammunition which were always found missing.

These raids went on periodically during the whole time the troops were encamped on the Quetta plain without ever one of our men coming to grief. Occasionally an unfortunate villager of the neighbourhood found near the camp under suspicious circumstances was arrested and strung up. But the Military authorities never even suspected how "the thing was really done." In fact, the General in command, in official despatches, remarked: "We had been terribly harrassed by marauders ever since we entered Afghanistan. Scarcely a night passed that some one, either European or Hindoostanee sepoy, were not foully murdered. Yet, notwithstanding the fact that a large number of Afghans had been caught and executed for these offences—the punishment did not seem to have had the slightest effect in deterring others from following the example of those who suffered the extreme penalty of the law. This is all the more remarkable as the Afghans, like all other Oriental races, regard hanging with greater horror than any other kind of death." Here is where the mistake was made. The real offenders were never caught or punished. The following is an example of how things were managed. In spite of very stringent orders to the contrary, a party of English soldiers consisting of two gunners and four men of the Fortieth Regiment left camp on an exploring expedition to the surrounding hills. The gunners had their carbines with them and the infantry their rifles. We saw them from a distance and lay in ambush until they approached within a few feet of our hiding place; then sprang up, and knifed them before they knew where they were. We took possession of their rifles and retired from the spot. The men were



not missed till evening roll call; and early next morning a party of native cavalry was sent to look for them. Their bodies were found on the hill side, about six miles from camp. Their heads had been cut off and placed on poles about ten feet high, and their bodies frightfully mutilated. When the cavalry arrived upon the scene of the butchery, some half dozen of hill men had collected to view the ghastly sight. But on the approach of the troops bolted. They were pursued, overtaken, and brought into camp. The men strongly protested that they knew nothing about the murders and had only come upon the scene accidentally. But the fact of their running away at the sight of the approaching cavalry, though they had not the arms of the victims in their possession, was considered proof positive of their guilt, and the whole six were strung up like herrings for the offence, and justice was satisfied. —

This kind of thing went on till the month of September 1841, when rumours of the critical state of affairs at Cabul reached Quetta. The troops were ordered to move at once on Candahar. But the storm which was then threatening did not burst over Cabul till a month or two afterwards. Nevertheless all intercourse between Cabul and Candahar was now at an end.

Here we were joined by fresh bands of mounted marauders, which enabled us to interrupt for a time, all communication between the two cities while we plundered everything we could lay our hands upon. General Nott was in command at Candahar and Major Rawlinson, Political Agent; two more able men or two men better acquainted with the country could not have been found, nevertheless we completely baffled their efforts to re-open anything like safe intercourse between Cabul and Candahar.

†Early in November a rumour got abroad that Guznee, which had been garrisoned by the Twenty-seventh Regiment Bengal Native Infantry had been recaptured by the Afghans, and that the troops which had formed the garrison were prisoners. A few days later the news of the murder of Sir Alexander Burns was received. Then we heard that the whole of northern Afghanistan was up in arms and that Sir William Macnaughten had been murdered by Akbar Khan. These rumours produced the greatest excitement and consternation amongst the troops at Candahar. It soon became apparent to General Nott and his officers that the final issue of the war depended upon the Candahar brigade holding out and getting ready when the winter had passed away to advance upon Cabul. But we made it extremely hot for the garrison. Every night regularly we fired upon the sentries. The troops were turned out and kept under arms the whole night. In this way we tried to harrass their life out, for the winter was a very severe one. Christmas night was specially selected for a brisk attack upon the garrison. We had heard that the officers of the different regiments were to dine together, and the rank and file of the English regiments would most probably be "enjoying themselves." So about nine o'clock we commenced to fire on the sentries and advanced guards so briskly that they were obliged to retire. The whole garrison was obliged to turn out and remain under arms till daylight. As time went on we became bolder and bolder. Some of our leaders actually went so far as to advise General Nott and Major Rawlinson to retire back to British India or they would share the fate of Sir William Macnaughten. But both these officers stood firm, and said they and the troops under them would die at their posts before they would

attempt to retire. Such was the state of affairs at Candahar up till the early part of February. A change now took place. Reinforcements despatched from Dadur had opened up communication with Candahar. News was received of General Pollock having arrived at Peshawur; of the advance of his force to Jamrud; of his occupation of Jellalabad; and the other steps taken before his final march upon Cabul. All this time the officials at Candahar were busy collecting stores and transport animals. This was by no means an easy task. For the Afghans do not cultivate a blade of grass or a sheaf of corn more than they want for their own actual use. Each village is in itself a small fort, which can be, and often is, defended against even the foraging parties of the central authority. The peasants of each village possess the land in common: it is their own, and they cultivate it for their own use. A male villager never leaves the ramparts of his own village without being armed. The very man who guides the lean pair of oxen that draw his broken down plough has a loaded matchlock slung over his shoulder. The enemies the Afghan fears most are his own chiefs and the officials of his own Government. If a villager cultivated more than he actually required for his own use it would only be labour thrown away. The cultivators have no rents to pay. They have no trade out of their own villages. The cloth they wear is woven by their own women, and the sheepskin cloaks, which serve to protect them from the Winter's cold, are cured and prepared by the same hands. As to their taxes, the amount they pay very much depends upon themselves. If they are strong and can show fight they will be let off easily. If otherwise, they will be ground down to the utmost and squeezed out of all they possess.



It was under these conditions that General Nott had to collect supplies for a large army. A foraging party consisting of a squadron of cavalry, with sufficient transport animals to bring in whatever could be purchased from the villages, and an officer with a bag of rupees, was told off daily to collect supplies. Here was a chance never open to us before. Hitherto we had only been able to *loot* arms, ammunition, stores and transport animals. Now there was some prospect of enriching ourselves with hard cash and we determined to take advantage of the opportunity. When the foraging party had got a safe distance away from the main body, we used to divide ourselves into two strong parties, one would lie in ambush on the line of route, while the other would break cover suddenly and make a faint attempt to charge down upon the English. The officer in command mistaking our intention would wheel his men about to face the approaching enemy. This would be our signal to retire. When the foraging party would give chase, leaving the treasure and transport animals unprotected, our party in ambush would now swoop down upon the camp followers leading the camels, cut them to pieces, *loot* the treasure chest and make off before the return of the escort.

While our party was thus engaged keeping the main body in play, another party of marauders did excellent service in rear of the moving column. The immense train of baggage animals was considerably reduced before Cabul was reached. Thus did we continue to harrass the troops, and enrich ourselves, during the entire march between the two cities.

When the Candahar brigade arrived at Cabul it was joined by the forces under General Pollock. We could then see it was all "up" with the Afghans. Pollock's



brigade was composed of seasoned English Regiments both cavalry and infantry. The troops remained in Cabul until the 12th of October, and then commenced to march, by brigades, towards Gundamuk and the Khyber Pass *en route* to British India. A few days before leaving, however, General Pollock ordered the great bazar of Cabul to be destroyed in revenge for the murder of Sir Alexander Burns and Sir William Macnaughten, as well as for the two regiments that were betrayed and slaughtered in the city a few months before.

The burning of the bazaar was our last grand scramble for *loot*. We waylaid the rich merchants fleeing from the city with all their portable property and eased them of every stick.

After this we prepared to return to our homes laden, as we were with the spoils, both of the conquerors and conquered! In fact we were the only party who benefited by the war. But unfortunately we did not long enjoy the fruits of our honest industry. We quarrelled amongst ourselves over the division of the spoil and while engaged cutting one another's throats, some neighbouring chiefs walked in and eased us of all we possessed. In the general scramble I murdered a chief who was very popular amongst the Pathans and was obliged to flee from my country and people and join a band of professional dacoits.

[NOTE.—General Roberts might get a few hints from the Pathan's story for the soldier's pocket-book.]

---

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE FAKIR'S STORY.

SHAHZADA MIR having concluded his entertaining narrative, for which he received a hearty round of applause, the chief called upon the *fakir* for the next story. He began after this manner.

I am a *fakir* by profession, and though I took to the trade more from necessity than choice, few of my order in India obtained a higher reputation for asceticism than your humble servant. By a long and steady course of training, I was able to bring my body into a state of subjection to my will that seemed, even to educated men and philosophers almost supernatural. There was no feat ever heard of as being performed by a *fakir* that I was not only able to imitate, but improve upon. My name and fame were household words at every native court in India.

Even at Cabul and Kashmir I astonished the *durbars*. I have demonstrated in my own person the possibility of existing for long periods without food or drink. I have been sealed up in an iron tank, and lived for weeks without light or atmosphere. I could exist as well under water as above it. I have remained suspended from a pole with a hook through my flesh for days together without feeling the least discomfort or inconvenience. I have reduced my body from fifty-six seers (112lbs.) to 20 seers (40lbs.) in twenty-four hours. I have risen from a six weeks' fast, which reduced my body to skin and bone, and resumed my normal condition within six hours. I have stopped the circulation of blood in my body, and allowed myself to be bitten by the most deadly poisonous snake in India with perfect impunity. I have had the moisture expelled from my flesh in a slow oven till my skin became like dried parchment. I have been put into a refrigerator and taken out embedded in a block of ice. In fact, I have been subjected to every kind of austerity known to ascetics of my order.

But the crowning feat of my life was performed at the court of Runjit Sing. Here, in presence of a number of European officers, medical men, and native princes, I was put into a box and buried in a cell, six feet below floor level, for three months. To prevent the chance of deception the doors of the cell were not only locked and sealed, but guarded by double sentries composed of Mahomedans and Hindus. I had neither food nor drink all this time. A piece of camphor was put into each corner of the box in which I was buried to keep out ants and other insects. At the expiration of three months the parties who witnessed my interment were summoned to see me exhumed. I was not myself conscious of what took place, but will quote

from the report of the principal medical officer present : —“ On opening the box we saw a figure enclosed in a bag of white linen fastened by a string over the head. The legs and arms were shrivelled and stiff, the face full and the head reclining on the shoulder like that of a corpse. I could discover no pulsation in the heart, temple or arm ; there was, however, warmth about the region of the brain, which no other part of the body exhibited. A sealed letter containing written instructions for reanimating the body, by the ascetic himself, was found fastened to the linen bag in which the *fakir* was encased. These instructions were religiously followed. Warm water was first poured over the body, the tongue was then drawn out and anointed with clarified butter (*ghee*) and a hot wheaten cake applied to the crown of the head. On the third application of these remedies the body of the ascetic became virtually convulsed, the rigidity of the limbs relaxed, but the pulsation was still feeble. On *ghee* being again applied to the tongue, however, the eyeballs became dilated, and recovered their natural colour, the tongue began to move and the muscles of the face to work as if the *fakir* wanted to speak, but could not get the organs of speech to obey the will. He evidently recognised those around him. More *ghee* was applied to the tongue and a few moments afterwards the ascetic spoke and intimated that he was glad to meet his old friends again after his long sleep.

“ I saw the *fakir* a week or so after his exhumation and he did not appear to have suffered in the least from the effects of his recent acquaintance with the grave. He was quite willing to repeat the experiment if sufficient inducement had been offered him.”

Here the doctor is not altogether quite correct. I did



feel the effects of my long sleep for nearly a year afterwards, though my outward appearance did not betray the fact to, even, my most intimate acquaintance; and I made a mental resolution never to repeat so dangerous an experiment. At least, if I did consent to be buried again it would only be for short periods.

My name and fame now began to spread throughout the length and breadth of the land. I was called the "*Fakir*" *par excellence*. The rich made me presents and the poor worshipped me as if I were a demi-God. In fact, most people looked upon me as a supernatural being.

It was at this period of my history I thought of entertaining a disciple, teach him the secrets of my art, and live on his earnings. Accordingly I began to look about for a suitable lad. The difficulty was not in getting volunteers, for hundreds came forward to offer their services, but in selecting a boy absolutely free from disease of any kind. This was a qualification necessary to success in the profession of a *fakir*. I at last succeeded in procuring a suitable subject and set about getting the youth into training. He proved an apt pupil and his progress was rapid. In less than five years he was equal to his master and promised to even surpass him. In one particular, and that a most important one, he beat me hollow, namely, in shamming death. He could drop like a log on the floor, suspend the heart's action, turn up the white of his eyes, and assume the rigidity and pallor of death. In fact, he could sham death so naturally that the cleverest doctors have been deceived by him. Unfortunately this trick was attended with a certain amount of risk, unless some person was present who knew how to restore animation. We thus became necessary to each other

The most curious incident of my life occurred while we were "doing" the Central Provinces. A messenger called upon me one night in a great state of excitement. He said he had been sent by his master, a wealthy zemindar, to call me to his place. The matter was urgent and I was wanted at once. I accordingly prepared to accompany the zemindar's messenger. My disciple was laid up at the time with a slight attack of dysentery and I would not let him move out at night so I went alone. On arriving at the zemindar's place everything was in a terrible uproar. The master of the house, in a fit of jealousy, had murdered one of his relations, and in order to destroy all traces of the crime had consumed the body. He knew, he said, that the victim would be missed on the morrow and his absence would lead to enquiry and probably to disagreeable consequences. I was asked to sham death and consent to be buried in the name of the murdered man. I agreed on the promise of a substantial reward. But on the understanding that I would be exhumed after a week and that my disciple was to be immediately informed. When all was ready preparations were made for my interment after the usual Mussulman customs of the country. At the cemetery my body was examined by the registrar in charge to see that it bore no marks of violence. The examination in this respect was satisfactory. Then, after recording the name, age, cause of death, and other particulars required by law the burial party were allowed to proceed with the interment. I had only been in the grave three days when the police got to hear of the murder at the zemindaree. The Magistrate and the D. S. personally went to make enquiries. The zemindar produced a doctor's certificate to show that the alleged murdered man had died of cholera. And the

records of the cemetery were sent for which proved that the body bore no marks of violence. Notwithstanding this evidence the authorities determined upon having the body exhumed and submitted to a *post-mortem* examination. I was accordingly taken up and carried to the district dead-house under a police guard. Here I was laid out on a table for dissection. I was quite conscious of all that was going on, but could neither move nor speak. I saw the *domes* getting the instruments cleaned and in order that were to cut me up, and lay then out ready for the doctor when he arrived. Even the jar that was to convey my stomach to the chemical examiner was brought in and put down beside the table on which I was stretched out. I heard the people converse and remark to one another "How well the body has kept considering it has been buried three days. There is actually no smell from it." To this a native doctor replied "Oh, that is in consequence of the amount of arsenic administered to the deceased. We believe death was caused from arsenical poisoning." While this conversation was going on a messenger came to say that the civil surgeon had been called away from the station to attend a serious case in the district and would not be back till the following morning. As the case was a serious one the D. S. would not allow the native doctor to proceed with the *post-mortem* examination in the absence of the civil surgeon. He ordered the dead-house to be locked up and a sentry posted over it. The windows, however, were left open to admit of a current of air passing through the building. Oh the horror of these few hours! No language can describe my agony of mind! Towards midnight, as I lay brooding over my inevitable fate, I heard a noise as if some one was entering the dead-house by the window.



The thought struck me that probably it might turn out to be my disciple. I was right. A few minutes after I felt the remedies used for restoring animation being applied to my body. In less than half an hour afterwards I was able to depart with my preserver. We left, as he had entered, through the window at the back of the building without being heard or observed by the sentry. Oh! how happy I felt as we turned our backs on the house of horror! I mentally vowed that I would never sham death or consent to be buried alive again for all the wealth of India! During our flight my companion told me how he had by pure accident discovered my situation and the steps he had taken to rescue me from that infernal charnal house. I could have embraced him for his devotion to his old master. But the time and circumstances were not suited to any outward show of inward feeling. I felt weak and fatigued and we could not, in consequence, continue our flight beyond a couple of miles from the district head-quarters.

The next morning there was a terrible commotion on discovering that the body of the supposed murdered man had been removed from the dead-house. The police were supposed to have been bribed by the zemindar to destroy the evidence of his guilt by making away with the corpse. The whole guard were consequently made prisoners, and a large party of police were sent out to scour the neighbourhood in search of the body of the deceased. Every house, every street, every mangoe tope, every tamarind grove, every nullah and piece of jungle in the neighbourhood was searched, but in vain. Then the fishermen were turned out with their nets to drag the tanks and rivers, but they were equally unsuccessful. The matter was given up at last as a bad job. Neverthe-



less we deemed it advisable to get away from the scene of these investigations as speedily as possible. Accordingly, as soon as I had gained sufficient strength to undertake the journey, we left the district, not however before paying the zemindar a private visit and getting our pockets well lined for the road. He was the party most interested in getting us out of the way; for he knew that so long as the police were unable to produce the body of his victim, he could not be charged with murder, or even accused of causing his disappearance.

We next turned up in the vicinity of Calcutta. This was an evil day for me, for I found in the city a much cleverer man than myself, not in my own profession, but in the art of detection.

My mate and I had gone out one afternoon on what we called a money-making expedition. We went to the house of a European gentleman residing in the suburbs. He was unmarried and alone. This we learned from the *durwan*. We had had also previously ascertained that he was a person of violent temper and had been had up on one or two occasions before the "beak" for thrashing his servants. He was therefore considered a likely victim. I sent on my mate to solicit alms and provoke an assault if possible by a show of impertinence and an insolent demeanour. I remained at the gate of the compound to watch the result. The *sahib* was seated smoking in the verandah when my disciple approached. "What do you want here?" was the *sahib's* first salute.

"I am a religious mendicant, and have come to solicit alms" was the reply. "*Jao*" said the *sahib* imperatively. "Go and work for your living."

"*Sahib*" retorted the mendicant with an insolent demeanour, "religious men like me don't work. We live

on charity, and you should consider it an honour to relieve us."

"You *haramzada*," exclaimed the *sahib*, "if you are not off in a jiffy I'll give you a sound caning."

"Don't work yourself into a temper, *sahib*" was the cool reply. "I don't intend to budge till I get something."

"Won't you?" said the *sahib*, and with that he jumped up from his seat, took down a cane walking stick from a rack, and ran at the "insolent beggar" as he called him. The mendicant made a feint attempt to escape and in doing so got a cut across the shoulders with the cane. He dropped at once insensible. The *sahib* was horror-stricken. I ran up, and falling on the body claimed the deceased as my brother. After some show of grief I hinted to the *sahib* that I would take away the corpse and say nothing about it if I was suitably rewarded. I was then asked what sum would satisfy me as hush money. I replied "Five hundred rupees." "Very good" said the *sahib* I'll send for the money." He told the *syce* to put the horse in the buggy and gave him a chit to take to town. The *syce* and buggy returned in about an hour with the Superintendent of the Detective Police, and not as I had fondly hoped with the five hundred rupees. The officer, after hearing the *sahib's* account of the mendicant's death made a thorough examination of the body—turning it over and over. He then made me stand up and answer a number of questions, as to my relationship to the deceased, his mode of life and general habits. This done, the police officer asked the *sahib* if he had a syringe and a bottle of solution of arsenic. He answered in the affirmative, and the articles were produced. Then two *mehters* were sent for, and on their arrival the detective

ordered them to inject the body of my disciple with the solution of arsenic. This was done, the officer explained, to keep the body fresh until the police surgeon could be summoned to make the usual *post-mortem* examination. On hearing this I fell on the ground, caught hold of the officer's feet and implored him to allow me to take the body away and I would say nothing about his death to any one. The detective shook his head. Seeing there was nothing for it but to expose the trick I turned my disciple over on his face and gave him one or two smart blows between the shoulders. This restored animation. The supposed dead man jumped to his feet and bolted for his life. The effect on the bystanders was electrical! Not a soul could move to follow the fugitive, so sudden and unexpected was the surprise. He got clear away. I, however, shared a different fate. I was charged with conspiring with another man, not in custody, to extort money by fraudulaut means from the *sahib* and sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment. I succeeded, however, in escaping from jail during the first year of my incarceration, and here I am, in a free land, amongst free people, a noble and fearless band of outlaws!

---

## CHAPTER VII.

---

### THE BABOO'S STORY.

THE *fakir* having ended his narrative amidst great applause the chief called upon the Baboo to favour the company with the next story. When the Baboo was named, roars of laughter burst from every man present. The chief himself could not refrain from joining in the general merriment, for every one wondered what adventures an educated Bengalee could have to relate calculated to entertain a band of outlaws! He never took part in any of their expeditions. His duty was to keep the accounts of the company; and in the event of any of the men getting into trouble, to manufacture a defence and prove an alibi. Here he was as much at home, as the bravest of that brave little band, in storming a village. He was a



useful man nevertheless and his great services were freely acknowledged by all, chief and men alike. True, a late Viceroy of British India had nearly succeeded in turning his poor little head. He conceived the idea that he was destined to become one of the ruling race in India and actually wanted to change places with his chief. But his "aspirations" were received with so much ridicule, and the chief actually offering to give him the post of honour in the next expedition, the Baboo said he would take time to think over the matter. He did think it over, and at last came to the conclusion that the honour was not worth the risk. He accordingly begged to be allowed to withdraw his application for the post of honour. This decision, however, was not arrived at until a new Viceroy had taught the Baboos that they were unfitted by nature to become leaders of men even in their own country. So the Baboo settled down to his business of casting accounts and manufacturing false witnesses in criminal cases.

This was the man the chief now called upon to entertain the company with a history of his antecedents before joining a band of dacoits. He thus began. I am a Baboo of the Baboos, what Nuncomar was to the Brahmins of the time of Warren Hastings, I am to the Baboos of the present day—a representative man—a true type of the race from which I sprang. What the Italian is to the Englishman, what the Hindoo is to the Italian, what the Bengalee is to other Hindoos, that am I to the Baboos in general. My physical organisation is weak even to effeminacy. I have been brought up from infancy in a constant vapour bath. My pursuits have been sedentary, my limbs are consequently delicate and my movements sluggish and languid. During many ages my people have been trampled upon by men of bolder and more hardy

breeds. Therefore courage, independence, and veracity are qualities unfavourable to my circumstances and surroundings. My mind bears a singular analogy to my body. It is weak, even to helplessness for purposes of manly resistance, but its suppleness, its tact, its subtility, its artfulness, its craftiness, its insinuating cunningness surpasses every other race on the face of the earth. The children of sterner climes may look upon the Baboo with contempt, but they are forced to admire the singular acuteness of his wonderful mind. All the arts which are the natural defence of the weak are more familiar to me than to the Ionian of the time of Juvenal or the Jew of the dark ages.\* What the horns are to the buffalo, what the paw is to the tiger, what the poison is to the snake, what the sting is to the bee, what the spring is to the cat, what cunning is to the jackal, deceit is to the Baboo. It is his armour of offence and defence.

The Baboo is an educational product, the result of engrafting Western ideas on an Oriental stock. The effect is the same as that produced by the teaching of Christianity to other races of India. "You have converted a heathen, but you have not made a Christian."

The moment I was able to comprehend, my mother, by her example, taught me the art of deception. She used to make holes in the mat walls of the zenana to peep through when she heard a man's voice in the street, and accuse me of being the delinquent when my father noticed the openings and questioned her on the subject. When I became a little older my father took my education in hand. He taught me many wise maxims. Here are one or two:—"A *mahout* is as strong as an elephant so long as he has

\* Lord Macaulay slightly altered.

got a firm seat on its neck ;” and again :—“ It is better to be the foot servant of a king than the chief of two villages ;” and yet another :—“ Walk *das kos* (twenty miles) to oblige the man you intend to ruin.”

This teaching made a deep and lasting impression on my young mind. It laid the foundation of that branch of knowledge in which I afterwards excelled, an intimate acquaintance with the knavery of life. In due time I was sent to school and a paternal Government allowed me six rupees a month subsistence money during the whole period of my scholastic career. This liberality my father explained was intended as a bribe to induce me to learn English and qualify for a writership in a Government office. However, I made fair progress in my studies and used to surprise the old folk, when home for the holidays, with my knowledge of English. True, it was “ Baboo English,” but my father was as proud of my exercises as if they had been written after the pure and polished style of Burke. Nevertheless, I was not allowed to neglect, what my father called my home studies, his favourite maxims. Consequently at school I spoke one language, at home another ; at school I dressed in one fashion ; at home in another ; at school I sat in one position ; at home in another ; at school I thought in one groove, at home in another ; at school I was taught one kind of morality ; at home another ; at school I learned the principles of common honesty, at home I was taught that common honesty was a humbug ; at school I was taught to love truth ; at home the reverse. My parents deemed lying one of the fine arts, a most desirable accomplishment to a man who had to make his way in the world ; at school I was taught the earth was round, at home that it was another shape ; at school I was taught that there was only one God, at



home that there were nine hundred and ninety-nine million gods. And so on till the end of the chapter. Whatever I learned at school I had to unlearn at home. I mixed up the teachings of the *Purohīts* with Fawcett and Mill, and tangled the *Shasters* with Spencer, and strung *Kalidasa* and Cleopatra in alternate lumps. The professors were at first delighted, and declared that this was the dawning of a "national literature." My progress was watched with much interest and more curiosity as I continued to mix up the proverbs which I had learned at home about climbing over other people's shoulders to employment, and the lesson taught me at school from Smiles on Self-Help!

The outcome of all this mixing up of Eastern and Western ideas was a "national literature" commonly called "Baboo English," at which grave and venerable professors shook their heads, and the world laughed! The world was right, what else could it expect? The professors declared they had looked for something better. Poor short-sighted mortals! It never struck them that a brain overloaded with Spencer's *Fairy Queen*, pp. 1 to 131 inclusive, and Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* and Bishop Colenso as far as *Decimal Fractions*, and Fawcett's *Political Economy*, and *Hypatia*, and the elements of *Logic* and whole pages of *Chaucer*, besides unlimited quantities of *Natural and Moral Philosophy* and mountains of *History*, was sure to have the same effect on their pupils as would result from an over-loaded stomach. It produced indigestion, and ultimately acute and chronic dyspepsia! Not one of us pupils was fit to appear at the B. A. examination when the time came, with any hope of success. But, thanks to my home teaching, I was equal to the occasion. I had a relation in the post office, with whose assistance I



managed to get a set of the examination questions. With this in my possession you will not be surprised to hear that I headed the list of passed candidates for the coveted "degree." I came off in flying colours, and here is my reward. A high Government official attended the University to distribute the honours. I was the first called up, and as the little piece of parchment was handed to me, I received at the same time a nice little lecture to this effect: "Now, my good little man, we have given you an excellent education, go forth into the world and carve out an honourable career for yourself. I am sorry that all our offices are full just now; but with the talents that you possess you will have no difficulty in obtaining employment." I bowed and retired. But I went away sorrowfully nevertheless. My subsistence allowance was stopped, and I had no Government appointment as I had fondly hoped, to look forward to. Besides I was the father of three children, having on the strength of my subsistence allowance, married before concluding my studies. And, to add to my misfortune, just at this time my wife's widowed sister, with a large family, were thrown on my hands. So after remaining at home for a month or two, brooding over my deplorable condition, I plucked up courage, and started one morning, with my degree in my pocket, to carve out "an honoureble career" for myself. I visited all the mercantile houses in Calcutta and solicited employment. When asked what I could do, I trotted out my degree. But the merchants shook their heads, and muttering something about fraudulent practices at examinations, gave me to understand that they did not want degree-holders, but a man who could write a neat hand and spell fairly well. As this was a branch of my education that had been frightfully neglected I could ob-

tain no employment, so I returned home more sorrowful and down-hearted than ever. I actually cursed the Government for making me a useless member of society and a burthen to my friends and relations.

At last I found my *metier*! I started a vernacular paper and abused the Government of India. I abused it up hill and down dale. Not as the radical papers in England abuse the Government, but as the French peasantry abused the aristocracy before the revolution! I abused it in the Ciceronian style, beginning:—*Quousque tandem, &c.*, I cursed it after the manner of “———,” I pulverised it on paper in the periods of Burke, and when my stock of English invective was exhausted, I had recourse to my own flexible tongue which abounds in abusive expressions. I abused the civil service. I abused the political officers, I abused, in turn, every department of the administration. And what was most shameful of all to abuse, I abused the planting community with a virulence and persistency worthy of a better cause, a community whose private capital saves thousands, nay hundreds of thousands, of my countrymen from starvation every year; turns desolate wastes and impenetrable jungles into delightful and smiling gardens; and prevents pestilence in congested districts by drawing off the surplus population. I am in fact, the inventor of the now common expression “brutal planter.” This is how I have revenged myself on the Government for poisoning my mind with half-digested studies; for forcing on me an English education for which I was neither morally nor mentally fitted.

But Act IX of 1878, known as the Gagging Act, brought my literary career to an end. I had now to seek other employment. But my name and fame had gone abroad; and the fearlessness with which I had attacked the

Government raised me up many friends and supporters amongst my own people. I was therefore not long waiting for a billet. The post of treasurer at the district head-quarters became vacant. I applied for the appointment, and as I was highly recommended by a countryman in the confidence of the Collector, secured the post. The Collector was a man whom I had abused up hill and down dale when I occupied the editorial chair, but he never recognised in the humble and obedient clerk, the scurrilous and lying journalist. I never came into the presence of the sahib without making three low bows. I went even further than this, for I made two bows to his bearer and one to his wife's ayah whenever I met them. I would have even imitated my great prototype, Nuncomar, and made three salaams to the Collector's jack ass every day of my life to gain his good opinion and retain my appointment, for it turned out to me a very lucrative one. There was always a large balance in the treasure chest, and as the sahib never inspected the cash on hand, I conceived the idea of turning it to profitable account. I let it out at high interest.\* I was getting on swimmingly when some scoundrel, jealous of my success in life, let the cat out of the bag. The Collector received an anonymous letter that I was trading on the treasury cash balance and amassing a fortune. At the time he said not a word about the matter nor showed the least sign that he was at all suspicious. He waited till Sunday, when the office would be closed and all the clerks absent. Then taking the key of the treasure chest he walked quietly to the treasury building and unlocked the box. Behold it was empty! He was horrified. But, nevertheless, made not the slightest commotion over the matter. He relocked the empty box, put the key in its usual place and went

\* Fact.



about his business as usual. That evening he drove into Calcutta, had an interview with the Commissioner of Police, Sir Stuart Hogg. Reid the detective was sent for and a consultation was held. The conclusion arrived at was that if I were arrested there would be no chance of recovering the money. Clever fellow that detective! So it was arranged that the Collector would return to head quarters as if nothing had occurred, and allow things to go on as usual. In the meantime Reid would arrange for an official letter to be sent to the Collector intimating that his office and treasury would be inspected by the Commissioner of the division on a given date. This letter would be opened by the head clerk in the first instance and would therefore excite no suspicion, especially as the date of the usual annual inspection was not far off. The letter arrived in due course and the Collector issued orders to all concerned to put their house in order for the coming ordeal. I was not aware at the time it would prove such a fiery one. I found myself now in a terrible fix. The parties to whom I had lent the money were mostly small traders, and it would be impossible for me to collect from these men in so short a time the sum required to make up the treasury balance. I was obliged, therefore, to have recourse to the bazar money-lender to carry me over the inspection. In this way I replenished my treasure chest and awaited quietly the arrival of the Commissioner. On the day fixed for the inspection no Commissioner appeared, but the Collector after breakfast paid me a visit. He enquired if my accounts were all right. I answered, after my customary three low bows, that my department would bear the strictest examination. "I am glad to hear it, Baboo" was the reply. I was then ordered to open the treasure chest and count over the contents. This was



done. The cash was found correct to a pie. The sahib then complimented me on my good management. I bowed again in acknowledgment. He was a bit of a wag, that sahib! The moment the cash was replaced in the chest and locked up he put the key in his pocket and went away whistling to his Cutcherry!

It then began to dawn upon my afflicted mind that there was something wrong. I was not kept long in suspense. Half-an-hour afterwards the head clerk handed me a paper from the Collector informing me that I was suspended till further orders. In the evening the Calcutta detective came and I now thought it was all up with me. But after a second consultation with the Collector it was decided that I was not to be prosecuted, but simply dismissed, and left to the vengeance of the money-lenders in the bazar whom I had swindled. As soon as it got noised abroad that I had been dethroned from office and power, the men to whom I had really advanced money repudiated their debts. Some bolted and others defied me to put them into court for the recovery of money that I had stolen from the treasure chest; while the men from whom I had taken temporary loans were ready to tear me to pieces when they discovered that I was unable to meet their claims. In this dilemma I had no other alternative but to clear out of the country, and as Act IX of 1878 was still in force I could not resume a journalistic profession. So I joined a band of dacoits instead!

When the Baboo concluded his story the band of outlaws declared that they only understood one half of the narrative. But what they did understand they pronounced excellent, especially where the Baboo was defeated and actually brought to grief in a contest with his own favourite weapons—deception.

“Ah! my friends” returned the Baboo, “it is the fate of all great men, who are too learned for their audience, they are not understood; and the cleverest man of whom we have any record, Lord Bacon, was as helpless as a child when he found himself driven into a corner by his enemies. It was not the difficulty of the situation to which I succumbed, but the suddenness of the surprise! It came upon me like a thunder-clap and left me feeble and prostrate both physically and mentally. But there is a day of retribution at hand. I will live to see it, please *Prajapati*, when the English shall be driven across the black water and a Baboo will rule India from Government House, Calcutta. When that day comes, my friends, I will make you all commanders of tens, commanders of hundreds, and commanders of thousands.”

This announcement was received with great applause and the company broke up for the night.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

---

### THE NATIVE CHRISTIAN'S STORY.

THE Baboo having concluded his interesting narrative, the chief called upon Solomon Christian for the next story. He accordingly, began in this manner.

I am the son of a celebrated salt-smuggler named Krishna Rao, and hail from the Coromandel Coast, that part of it which forms the Eastern boundary of the district of Nellor in the Madras Presidency, lying between  $30^{\circ} 25'$  and  $15^{\circ} 55'$  N. Lat. and between  $79^{\circ} 9'$  and  $80^{\circ} 14'$  E. Long. I like to be particular in these minor details of my autobiography. It is a duty I owe to my country that the birth-place of one of her most illustrious sons shall not, like the immortal Shakspeare, be buried in doubt and obscurity.

When I was only eight years of age my father was convicted of salt smuggling and, as it was his fifteenth offence, he was sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment. I was in consequence left to the care and protection of one of the worst step-mothers that ever fell to the lot of an unfortunate orphan of eight. Whenever she went out on any business, for my father left her very well provided for, she used to tie me to a stake driven into the floor of our hut, to keep me out of mischief as she called it, during her visits to a neighbouring grog-shop. It so happened one day while my mother was absent the *parah* in which we lived caught fire. I was as usual secured to the stake in the floor. I could hear the noise and bustle of people running to and fro in the street calling out fire! fire! I made desperate efforts to free myself, but in vain. Just as the devouring element had caught the thatch of our hut, the *padre* sahib burst open the door, and seeing my situation, cut the rope with which I was secured and saved me from being converted into animal charcoal.

I was taken by the *padre* to the mission home, and as my step-mother never turned up to claim me, I was baptized, and transformed into a full blown Christian. I was blessed with the name of Solomon. It was a name of happy omen, as will presently appear. Having been successfully initiated into the visible church of Christ, I was next sent to the Mission school, where, if my educational progress did not come up to the expectations of my teachers, I soon developed a remarkable faculty for invention, that surprised them.

The bent of my genius lay in the art of knavery. Don't laugh, my beloved comrades it requires a genius to act the knave. What does my friend Lytton say?



Not the author of the Indian Gagging Act, mind, but the author of the author of that hateful piece of legislation: "A knave is a philosopher, though a philosopher is not necessarily a knave. I hold of knavery as Plata hath said of virtue, 'Could it be seen incarnate, it would beget a personal adoration.'" And so say I. And so say all of us! (Hear! hear! from the audience).

There is little in the life of a youngster, during his early school days, worth relating. Suffice it to say, though I was the most consummate rascal in school, the missionaries thought me a paragon of all the virtues. They would often say to one another, 'Well, in this lad at all events, we have buried the old Adam, and out of the unpromising material raised up a new and perfect man.' I was regarded as a miracle of truth and honesty, being an Oriental. True, I gained my good name at the expense of my school fellows. But it was a game of diamond cut diamond, in which I always held the best hand. All the boys hated me because the *padres* loved and trusted me. In retaliating I exacted a fearful revenge, on my enemies. When I wanted to crush a boy who had done me an injury, I commenced by cultivating his friendship, and after gaining his confidence led him into some serious mischief, and then reported the matter to the *padre*. Another trick of mine was to steal some article from the mission house and hide it in the bed of the party I wanted to get into trouble. When the article was missed the *padre* would announce the fact in the school room and appeal to the conscience of the thief, if he was present to give it up on pain of incurring the everlasting displeasure of the great Creator of the universe. The *padre* after delivering himself in this fashion would pause for a reply. Finding no one answer I would step

forward, and in a voice, choking with emotion, declare that the stigma that had been cast upon the whole school, by the offence of one guilty person was acutely felt by every honest and true hearted Christian present. I could see the *padre's* lips move in silent prayer that he had been instrumental in plucking me like a brand from the burning and leading me from darkness to light, as I concluded, with a request that the innocent might not suffer for the guilty, but that a thorough search should be made in the school dormitory for the missing article. This appeal was always successful with the result intended.

My cleverest piece of ingenuity during my scholastic career was in obtaining copies of the examination questions in which I had to appear before entering on my profession as a *vakil*. Two of the *padres* of our mission were the examiners. The questions when prepared were printed at the mission press. The only persons allowed into the printing office during the process of setting up the questions in type and printing them off were the *padre*, the compositor and myself. I was selected for this duty because I was the most trustworthy boy in school. My work was ostensibly to turn the handle of the machine, but in reality to keep an eye on the compositor. When everything was ready the *padre* supplied fifty sheets of blank paper. The first sheet was struck and taken to his desk for correction. The moment the compositor left the machine I sat down upon the fount of type and received a capital impression on my posterior. When the necessary corrections had been made in the proof the compositor returned to the machine and made the corresponding alterations in the fount of type. This done the printing was proceeded with, and immediately the last sheet was struck off, the type was broken up in presence

of myself and the *padre*. The moment I obtained my liberty I hurried off to the dormitory and stretching myself face downwards, in front of a looking glass with pencil and paper, copied off the impression I had carried away from the printing office.

In due course the day of examination arrived. I passed with flying colours. In fact headed the list by a long way. The *padre* declared I was the best "pass" that had ever gone up from the mission school.

If I had been regarded before this event with feelings of jealousy by my school mates, I was now the object of their envy. All kinds of insinuations were made to account for my successful "pass," one was that the *padre* who had rescued me, as he called it "like a brand from the burning," and who never lost an opportunity of parading the circumstances of my rescue before strangers, wanted to make me out superior to my school mates, not only in virtue but intellect, awarded me marks to which I was not entitled. However, I was prudent enough to keep my own counsel and secretly enjoyed the feelings of envy my success had inspired in the breasts of my companions.

*schoolastic career*

— Shortly after my examination I was apprenticed to a firm of solicitors. Here I made good use of my time, and after three years, secured a certificate to practice as a *vakil*. This was the crisis of my life. I was now thrown upon my own resources, and spent some weeks in deciding upon where I should start practice. Every court was blocked with men of my profession and there was little or no chance for a newcomer. He was looked upon by the older hands as an interloper. At last I decided on a district and removed to the neighbourhood of the court in which I intended to practice. I had not been many hours



in the place when I was visited by two or three members of the "local bar" from whom I learned that there were eight practising vakils, but that two could do all the work to be had with infinite ease, and then have lots of time to spare. This news was not very encouraging certainly. One of my visitors ironically asked me what I was going to do with my spare time? I replied, with a smile "Create work for my professional brethren." They looked at one another in astonishment. One had the courage to say. "I was just the kind of man they wanted. If I brought my own work with me I would be made welcome, but doubly so if I created work for others."

A day or two after this conversation I appeared in court and was formally introduced to the *hakim*. There were only two or three petty cases to be disposed of, not one of my professional brethren held a single brief. We sat out the two hours occupied in disposing of the cases before the court and retired with the *hakim*. One of the senior vakils said to me on leaving the court. "Well, brother, what do you think of the outlook?" "It is certainly not very promising" I replied. "But I do not despair of being able to improve matters." My friend looked at me enquiringly. "Look here," said I, "I am given to understand that there are two wealthy zemindars in this neighbourhood whose lands join each other, and that they are not on the best of terms. Would it not be possible to set them by the ears in such a way as to bring them into court." My friend stopped short as if a new light had dawned upon him. Then after a short pause exclaimed, "Excellent! Capital! I never thought of that before." "Look here," said I, "there is a piece of char land recently formed which both parties claim. Now I propose that we send men during the night to erect a *chupper* on this piece



of waste land, and the first thing in the morning, give notice to each of the two claimants of what has occurred. Both men will at once accuse the other of taking unlawful possession, and will immediately collect his retainers and proceed to the spot to demolish the *chupper*. In the meantime, notice can be sent to the magistrate that a breach of the peace is anticipated. He will despatch a *posse* of police to prevent it. The latter can lie in ambush until the two hostile parties meet, and then sally forth and arrest them for being members of an unlawful assembly and rioting. If this case don't give full time employment to every pleader in the district for the next twelve months my name isn't Solomon. "Let me embrace you, brother," cried my friend in a transport of delight. "You're an honour to the profession." So we embraced and retired to the house of another learned brother to smoke and mature our plans for the fray.

A few days after this conversation the police brought in to *hajat* thirty prisoners, some with broken heads and others with wounds and bruises all over the body. A cart laden with *lathies*, a few old swords, and a matchlock accompanied the rioters. It was a sight to charm the heart of a lawyer! Even to this day my chest swells with honest emotion when I think of the effect produced by my ingenuity. All my professional brethren swarmed round me like vultures round carrion in hopes of participating in some of the pickings. But there was plenty for all. I took under my special care one of the zemindars. My new made friend who was in the secret, appropriated the other. The zemindars' retainers, mostly well-to-do tenants were distributed amongst the other members of my profession. We managed amongst us to spin the case out in the lower court for nine months by

frequent postponements. Then the case was committed to the sessions. This occupied another three months ; and as the pleaders who conducted the case in the lower court would be required to watch the proceedings at the sessions they had to be furnished with retainers. At the sessions the two zemindars as principals were convicted and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Most of the retainers were let off by the infliction of a fine.

But the case did not rest here. The appeals entered by the zemindars against their sentence gave employment to the lawyers for another twelve months. Indeed, the case might have lasted as many years, but for the fact that the appellants had run through the whole of their vast zemindaries. They were both, to use a trite but common expression, beggared !

I had now to look about me for another crow to pluck. I was not long in procuring one. A well-to-do zemindar named Shamlall Dass was in constant hot water with his tenants. No Irish landlord had ever more difficulty in collecting his rents. Frequent lawsuits, both civil and criminal, between the zemindar and his ryots was the result. The thorn in the side of the zemindar was some half-a-dozen of Ahirs who had settled on the estate. These men used to put up the other tenants not to pay rent. How to get rid of these men was the one subject that exercised the mind of the zemindar. I was applied to for counsel and advice and suggested a plan that had the entire approval of the zemindar. This is what I proposed. The zemindar had a tall, powerful, up-country man named Mohun, an expert *lathial* (club-man). It was by the aid of this man the zemindar was able to squeeze his land revenue out of his tenants. The Ahirs, however, were more than a match for Mohun, even with

his own favourite weapon. He could do nothing with them and the bad example was demoralizing the other tenants. Mohun had been frequently threatened that his corpse would be found some morning lying in the jungle. This was known by, and often reported to the police and the magistrate, consequently if such an event did happen nobody would be surprised. "Let us," said I to the zemindar in confidence, "take advantage of this feeling in the neighbourhood to entangle the Ahirs in the net they had cast for Mohun. You give Mohun, say a hundred rupees, send him to his country with instructions to keep in hiding till further orders. I will procure a corpse, place it in the jungle near the Ahir village; and, when Mohun is missed, give information to the police. The latter will make a search for the missing man and discover the bones of the corpse in the jungle with such other evidence as will leave no doubt on the minds of any reasonable man but that Mohun has been the victim of a foul and brutal murder. The Ahirs will be run in for the crime, and you just leave their conviction to me."

The zemindar could hardly restrain his delight. He caught me by both hands, and thanking me most heartily, promised a handsome and substantial reward. We parted. The zemindar to send off Mohun to his country, and I to procure a corpse. Five days after this interview with the zemindar the Ahirs were all in custody on a charge of murder. I secured one eye-witness to the crime—a professional informer. This man stated before the magistrate that on returning from a neighbouring *hât*, (market) after dark on Monday night, he heard the voice of Mohun calling for assistance. He approached the jungle from which the sound issued and found the six prisoners holding down the deceased, while one of their number, he was not certain which, cut his



throat. After the perpetration of the murder the six Ahirs now before the court flung the body into a ravine and returned to their homes. On the way the knife with which the deed was committed was buried in a field. He pointed out the place to the police and the knife was unearthed. The witness in reply to a question from the court said, "I did not show myself when I heard Mohun calling for help as I was afraid of incurring the anger of the Ahirs. They might have killed me also, I consequently squatted down behind a bush and remained out of sight. I did not report what I had seen to any one until I heard the police were searching for Mohun, because I got drunk that night and forgot all about the matter."

The police proved the finding of the bones of a man in the nullah alluded to by the last witness. The flesh had been stripped off the bones by jackals, a bunch of keys and a pair of shoes were found near the spot which were clearly proved to have belonged to the missing man. Other witnesses followed to show the enmity existing between the deceased and the prisoners.

This completed the case for the prosecution and the six Ahirs were remanded to the sessions on a charge of wilful murder. The case against the prisoners was so clear that no one doubted the result of the forthcoming trial.

Two months elapsed before the opening of the Criminal Sessions. The prisoners when brought before the Judge and Jury looked terribly crestfallen, the very picture of woe and despair. Their appearance told against them, and their downheartedness and dogged manner were regarded as evidence of their guilt. Before a witness had spoken every one present in court had pronounced them guilty. One or two spectators had remarked that murder was depicted in each of their faces.



The case was called on, the jury sworn, the bones of the victim laid out on a table and the prisoners asked to plead to the charge.

"Not guilty" was the almost inaudible response of each of the accused. The evidence was then proceeded with. All went well till the medical officer was called into the box. All the previous witnesses were at one with each other in regard to the height of the missing Mohun. He was not under six feet. The medical testimony negatived this point. The bones before the judge and jury were declared to be that of a man not more than five feet eight inches in stature. But the judge explained this to the jury by saying, the medical officer had never seen Mohun alive, and as he was a reputed bully his height would probably be exaggerated.

This point settled, the jury were asked to consider their verdict. So after a short consultation, without quitting their seats, the foreman stood up and the judge put the question. "Well, Mr. Foreman, how say you! Do you find the prisoners at the bar guilty or not guilty of the murder of Mohun?" "Guilty, my Lord," was the reply. "And that is the verdict of you all," continued the judge. "Yes, my Lord" returned the foreman of the jury.

*Tableau.* Just as the judge was about to pronounce sentence on the prisoners who should stalk into court but the veritable Mohun himself! The crowd of spectators melted away as if by magic. Every one present except those in the secret believed they had seen a ghost. Two of the prisoners fainted! The doctor in his excitement blurted out "Mohun, are these," pointing to the table where the skeleton was laid out; "your bones?" Mohun, like one bewildered, stood glaring at the ghastly sight, but made no reply. The judge here interposed and ordered Mohun into the witness box. Mohun's state-

ment to the judge was to this effect. He had been paid by the zemindar to go to his country for a short time and keep out of the way. He was not told for what purpose. He simply did as he was ordered by his master and departed at a moment's notice. A man in the bazar had owed him some money and he wrote to him privately demanding payment. The debtor wrote back saying I was dead and denying the debt. I have consequently come here to find out what it all means and recover my money through the court. He was not murdered or molested by the prisoners at the bar though he knew they bore him no good will, and the bones on the table were not his!

As Mohun concluded his statement the judge ordered all the witnesses for the prosecution to be detained in court. The order came too late. They had all cleared out on the first appearance of Mohun. I made for a native State, where I remained in hiding for some time. But afraid of being recognised if I continued to practise at the bar, I ultimately decided upon joining this honourable company of freebooters where I have lived in peace and security ever since.

N. B.—An almost parallel case to the above came before the North-Western Provinces Court on appeal in June 1889. A report of the case appeared in the *Pioneer* and was copied into the *Indian Daily News* of the 15th of June 1889.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE STORY OF THE "MOCK RAJAH."

SOLOMON CHRISTIAN having concluded his interesting narrative for which he was enthusiastically applauded, the Chief called upon the "Mock Rajah" for the next story. He accordingly began after this fashion.

I am called a "Mock Rajah" by my enemies and dupes, but my friends and retainers call me a "Real Rajah" and a jolly good fellow to boot. I have, in my time, made money like a mint and squandered it like a prince. I have entertained like an emperor and fleeced my guests like a Clive or a Hastings. I have held courts with more pomp and ostentatious display than is permitted to the descendants of the Great Mogul or the survivors of the house of Tamerlane! I drove a more gorgeous



equipage and possessed a camp of elephants more richly caparisoned than the Kings of Delhi. I occupied garden villas more profusely and luxuriously fitted up than the drawing-rooms of Hastings.' "Elegant Marian," of whom the ayahs in liquid melody sing their little charges to sleep to the tune of *Alla Malla Punia*. I have reclined in palanquins of sandal-wood adorned with carved ivory, such as the *begums* of the princely house of Oude, in the zenith of their power and splendour, would have been proud to possess. I have sat down, with my guests at tables covered with crystal and silver, and drank champagne from cups of burnished gold. Rich zemindars and merchants worth lakhs of rupees had prostrated themselves at my feet and craved my patronage. And to what do you think, my friends, I am indebted for all this homage, magnificence, luxury and pomp? To my wit! gentlemen; to my wit! I was born to an inheritance of poverty, but like my friend, Solomon, I foregathered when a youth with a Christian Missionary from whom I learned to read and write. This was of great assistance to me in my subsequent career. I also benefited much by his lectures. He was a great moral philosopher, and being myself of a contemplative temperament I turned my attention to philosophical studies. The Missionary was delighted and gave me the run of his library. I stumbled, quite by accident I assure you, upon "Paul Clifford." This book was to me, what the Greek authors should be to the academician, a study by day and a dream by night. It turned my thoughts to the possibility of uniting the wisdom and ingenuity of the West to the cunning and mendacity of the East. I succeeded. But my success, in the long run, made me indiscreet. I fell, and great was the fall thereof! But it is some consolation to think that no



other person in this country, either before or since my time, swindled the public with half so much grace and ingenuity as your humble servant. Even my first attempt at "raising the wind," as swindling is called in Europe, was a masterpiece of ingenuity.

This is how I did it. I sent a confidential agent to Benares to engage furnished apartments, the very best available in the holy city—for a distinguished and noble lady of rank. A Ranee in fact, who had been lately left a widow, and was about to undertake a pilgrimage to the most sacred shrine in India in accordance with Hindoo custom on such occasions. My agent was successful. A magnificent house, most gorgeously fitted up, was engaged for three months. In due time the Ranee arrived, and, was installed with all due ceremony. I acted the part of Dewan or Prime Minister. The noble lady's arrival was signalised by a munificent act of charity. Thousands of beggars were fed and hundreds of Brahmins were presented with money and clothes. This was done through a local agent appointed to carry out Her Highness' wishes; of course on tick. The Ranee's name and fame spread throughout the city like wild fire. Her noble acts of charity were the talk of every bathing ghât and poetical effusions in her praise were chanted in every temple on the banks of the sacred river. A deputation of the principal Brahmins waited upon Her Highness with garlands of flowers. I received them with all due ceremony in the name of my illustrious mistress, and took this opportunity of giving out that Her Highness proposed building a marble temple to commemorate her pilgrimage to the holy city. Before sundown that day the project was the talk of the town. I took advantage of this circumstance to notify in the vernacular papers that Her Highness the

Ranee intended to build a magnificent marble temple on a certain site on the sacred river approved of by a deputation of the chief Brahmins of Benares, and called for plans and specifications. It was further notified in the advertisement that no tender for the construction of the temple would be accepted unless accompanied by a deposit of rupees ten thousand in currency notes as security, which would be returned in the event of a tender being rejected. Within a fortnight of the appearance of this notification in the local papers, I had some thirty applications from builders and contractors for the construction of the marble temple, and a deposit at the local bank of rupees three hundred thousand. In order to make the business look straightforward and above board, I made each tenderer deposit the amount of his own security in the bank in my name and bring me the bank's receipt. But this is not all. I received in bribes from the different tenderers a sum equal to fifty thousand rupees, to induce me to exercise my influence with Her Highness to procure the contract for the party who paid best. Need I say that each candidate went away believing himself to be the successful tenderer.

While all this was going on the principal jewellers had been induced to send in cases of the most costly gems for Her Highness's inspection. In this way property, in the shape of jewellery, to the value of a lakh and a half of rupees was got together. I now thought the time had arrived when I might safely close on the fruits of my honest industry. Accordingly I drew the security deposits from the bank and cleared out, leaving Her Highness the Ranee to account to my dupes for my absence. I had not been missed, at least by the outside world, for two or three days. But when my absence came to be noised

about the city, there was the devil to play! The Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police were besieged by my dupes, who clamoured for vengeance and would not be pacified.

The Ranee was interviewed by the two officials above-named. They found her in tears. But she, poor thing, knew no more about her late prime minister than the man in the moon. "Then who are you pray?" queried the Magistrate. "Who am I?" repeated the Ranee between her sobs; "why, I'm only one of the *demi monde*! I belong to Lucknow. I was brought here by the man you are enquiring after. He came to my lodgings one day; pretended to have fallen in love with me, and asked me to accompany him. He told me he was a high caste Brahmin and a man of substance, and that it would be necessary for me to go to Benares where I would have to undergo a ceremony of purification before he could marry me. I believed all he told me and I agreed to accompany him. I do not know from what part of India he came, or even his name. He was only known to me as the 'Brahmin.'"

This was all the information the representatives of the law could get out of the Ranee. A warrant was accordingly issued for the arrest of the "Brahmin," which was never executed.

I next turned up in Calcutta as the Rajah of Humyunnore. But as nobody knew in what part of India Humyunnore was situated my title was never called in question. This is one of the advantages, to a man of my profession, of having a vast empire for his happy hunting ground. Few people ever learn its geography sufficiently to be able to ask unpleasant or embarrassing questions. I always pass muster for a *pucca* Rajah as long as I remain



in <sup>one</sup> a place. It is only after my departure the public discover their mistake. Then one party, the victimized, exclaim: "Who would have thought it:" while another section, the cautious, shake their heads and say, "I always thought there was something 'fishy' about that customer!"

I will now proceed to tell you how I fared in the capital of India. I engaged a splendid mansion in the suburbs, fitted up and furnished in the best style. I made the acquaintance of all the rank and wealth among the native community in and around Calcutta, more especially strangers visiting the capital. I invited them to my suburban villa and entertained them like princes. When my guests were flushed with champagne, cards were introduced, and we played till midnight; aye till morning frequently, at my favourite game of "beggar my neighbour."

Had I stuck to "card sharpening" I might to this day have been acting the "Rajah." But my success made me indiscreet. One of my guests—a ship-owner, and a very prudent fellow, who had risen from nothing, could not be induced to try his luck at cards. I therefore determined to ease him of some of his superfluous cash in another line, more agreeable to his instincts—a commercial transaction. I accordingly sent for my friend one day and proposed to charter three of his ships to carry rice to Jedda. The project had all the appearance of a paying transaction and the prudent speculator fell into the trap. My terms were liberal, but one of the conditions was, that he would deposit fifty thousand rupees as security for carrying out the contract. This he agreed to, and sent the money by his sircar that same evening. I took the money and granted a receipt to this effect: "Received fifty thousand rupees in full settlement of a debt of honour"



*viz.*, money lost at cards." The rascal took the receipt straight to Reid, the Detective Superintendent, to whom he explained the whole transaction. I was consequently arrested on a charge of swindling. I engaged the best counsel in Calcutta, and though I spent over a lakh of rupees in law expenses, I was convicted and sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment.

I was not long in jail though. About a month after my sentence I was sent to attend on a bricklayer who was engaged doing some repairs to the governor's quarters. It was the winter months and the days were short. During the day I observed a large bath tub turned upside down in the bath-room. It struck me at once that this would be a capital place to conceal oneself. Accordingly towards evening I crept unobserved under the bath tub. Here I lay till the small hours of the night. The governor had been dining out and did not return till after twelve o'clock. When he came home he undressed and went to bed. As soon as he began to snore I crept out from under the tub, took off my jail clothes and got into the governor's, even to his patent leather boots and bell topper. As I have already said, the season was mid winter, and it was necessary in going out at night to wear an overcoat and comforter. These garments quite concealed my features and I had no difficulty whatever in passing the sentry at the front gate unrecognised. In fact he mistook me for the governor and sprang to attention as I approached. I returned the salute and passed out into freedom!

Of course I had to give up the idea of playing at "Rajah" in British territory after this episode. I consequently thought my safest course would be to seek shelter and safety in a Native State. I made several trials

since leaving British India to "raise the wind" in my professional line, but found it would'nt *hoga*. Nobody in a Native State has got a rupee but the Rajah himself, or if he has, he is obliged to hide it in the earth and nothing will bring it out but the thumb screw. I had therefore no other alternative in order to live but join a band of dacoits!

It is to these circumstances, my friends, you are indebted for the honour of having a Rajah amongst you to-night.

---

## CHAPTER X.

## THE DAROGAH'S STORY.

THE Mock Rajah having finished his narrative amidst tremendous applause the chief called upon the *darogah* for the next story. He, accordingly, began in this manner.

My name is Gooroo Prossono Bidyaratana, which, being interpreted, means "Gem of learning." My father, who was only a poor *moharir* (writer) in the District Collector's Court had a great ambition to see his son a Deputy Magistrate. I was consequently educated to this end. As we were high caste Brahmins, my father by way of adding to my prestige induced an assembly of *pundits* (learned men) to bestow upon me the title of *Bidyaratana* (gem of learning.) Under this cognomen, after I had

finished my education, I was presented to the Collector. But as there was, at the time, no opening for Deputy Magistrate, I was induced to join the police as *daroga*. This, the Collector observed, "will give you an insight into the working of the police force and make you acquainted with the minor details of a Deputy Magistrate's duty." I bowed acquiescence to the Collector's advice, and entered on my new duties with a determination to gain distinction even as a police *daroga*.

About a month after my appointment a friend of my patron, for, like my countryman the Baboo, I believed in climbing over other men's shoulders to distinction, and consequently clung to the protection of a patron—lost a gold watch and chain from a toilet table in his dressing room. He wrote to the Collector reporting his loss. I was sent for and ordered to take up the enquiry. "Here is a splendid chance of distinguishing myself" thought I, and I proceeded to the house of my patron's friend and instituted strict enquiries amongst the servants. Two days spent in searching the premises for the missing watch and recording statements led to no tangible result. At last I asked permission of the *sahib* to take the servants to the *thana* (police station) for further investigation. The gentleman acceded to my request and the whole of the domestic establishment were arrested and conveyed to the station house. I put them all into one room and gave them half an hour to consult amongst themselves, and decide upon the advisability of giving up the culprit or taking the consequence. In the meantime, I had a sack stuffed with straw and placed in the adjoining room. At the expiration of the half hour's grace, I revisited the prisoners and enquired if they had made up their minds about giving up the culprit? No one answered. So I



selected one of the number, the least likely man amongst the lot to have committed the theft, and took him away, saying, "If I cannot induce you to denounce the culprit by fair means I must do it by foul." The man fell at my feet and protested his innocence. I ordered two constables to carry him to the torture chamber. The moment he was removed I turned the key on the remaining prisoners.

Shortly afterwards the sound of flogging was heard from the room adjoining the lockup and the voice of a man, in extreme agony calling upon his gods for mercy! But the louder the man cried the harder and quicker fell the shower of blows. Till at last the voice became fainter, *c*, and ultimately ceased. Then the flogging stopped and some one said loud enough to be heard by the prisoners in the next room, "He's dead! What will we do with the body?" "Oh" said I "never mind. Take it away and fling it down the well. He'll never be missed. There is no evidence of the crime. It is all amongst ourselves, and I expect every man to be *chup!* (silent). Dead men tell no tales. It is much safer to kill them outright than to leave them with evidence of torture on their body." The constables acquiesced and a noise was made as if dragging the body away. One of the chowkidars remarked, "How heavy dead men are." "Yes," returned I, "the devil enters into the body of a man who dies under the lash rather than open his heart to the police to bring a guilty person to justice, and doubles its normal weight. His *bhuta* (ghost) has entered some mangy dog or other unclean animal by this time."

A few minutes after this conversation a splash was *c* heard as if something had fallen into the well, which was close to the lockup, and the constables returned and reported to me that the body was disposed of. "Very

good " said I, " we must get in another of the prisoners and put him through the same process unless he has prudence enough to save his own neck by peaching on the others."

Accordingly I re-entered the lockup and found the prisoners huddled together in a corner nearly dead with fright. Though it was mid winter, their clothes were as wet from perspiration, as if they had been pulled out of a tank! One man was bleeding from the nose through sheer funk! " Well," said I addressing the prisoners collectively, " which do you prefer, keeping silent or sharing the fate of your fellow servant?" To this question one of the prisoners replied, joining his hands and beating the ground with his forehead, " My crime has already caused enough of mischief. I will not have the blood of another innocent man to answer for. I stole the watch and buried it in the garden beneath a rose tree. I will point out the spot if you accompany me." To this I readily consented. I went with the accused to the place indicated and recovered the watch. I took it, together with the prisoner, to the *sahib*. He was delighted and wrote to the Collector praising my detective ability. After securing the culprit in *hajjat* pending trial, I returned to the *thana* and released all the other prisoners from custody with the exception of the man ordered to the torture chamber. I wanted to create a further surprise and consequently kept this man concealed for a few hours. As I anticipated, the released prisoners went straight from the *thana* to the Magistrate's *kutcherry* and accused me, upon oath, of beating one of their fellow servants to death in order to extort a confession and afterwards throwing the body down a well. As the charge was a very serious one, the Magistrate came to the *thana*

himself to enquire into the matter. I, of course, produced the missing man, he denied having been beaten or in any way ill-treated by the police, and his body, which was examined by the civil surgeon, bore no marks of violence. The Magistrate was now satisfied that the charge against me was a false and malicious one, and he ordered my accusers to be criminally prosecuted.

I never told the Magistrate or the Collector, though, that the noise my accusers heard from what I called the torture chamber, was a chowkidar beating a sack stuffed with straw; or that the man who simulated the cries of a prisoner on the rack was also one of my own constables.

This case proved very useful to me during my subsequent career as police *daroga*. The *sahibs* would never believe any complaint made against me by accused persons; or in fact, any of the criminal classes. I could, therefore, just do as I liked.

I gained a great reputation in the police as the inventor of several new and improved systems of torture. The stuffed sack dodge is entirely the creation of my own ingenious mind. It is called after me "the Bidyaratana system." It is a system extremely safe to practice, you may drive a man mad by it without leaving a scratch on his body. What have the doctors to say to that! Unfortunately it can only be practised once on the same individual, so it is necessary to keep a register of the criminals or accused persons who pass through the mill.

There is another system of torture, also of my own invention, which is nearly as effective as the above, with this advantage, that it may be practised any number of times on the same person, and if properly done, it leaves no marks. You tie down your man on a *charpoy* (native cot) with his feet projecting about three inches over the



bottom rail. You then get a piece of half round seasoned bamboo about eighteen inches long and commence beating the soles of the feet. The strokes must be short and sharp, but not too heavy. In this way you beat a man's flesh below the surface into a jelly without leaving a single external mark. It is very tedious, though. You have to keep at it for hours. But the pain after the first hour is agonising. I have known a man to die of lock jaw after one of these beatings, and the doctor who made the *post-mortem* examination could not account for the cause of death. The police surgeon's investigation seldom or ever extends below the trunk of the body. It is principally confined to the brain, heart, lungs, liver, and spleen. I noticed this particularly during my police experience and took my measures accordingly. I never marked my subject above the soles of the feet.,

There are several other forms of torture practised by the police, but these, with one exception, are only resorted to by men who do not understand their business. The exception is "cupping the navel." You procure a large black beetle and place it under an inverted cup directly over the navel. The sensation produced, if your subject is a green horn, is simply maddening. You fancy the creature is burrowing into your entrails. But old hands get used to "cupping the navel" and don't mind it in the least.

The most ordinary and common mode of torture practised by the police to extort confession is that of tying up an accused person to a beam or rafter by the thumbs. The body is drawn up until the toes just touch the ground. The pain is most excruciating, and the unfortunate victim very often goes off into a faint. He is then let down and water dashed in his face. On recovering consciousness,



he is swung up again unless he confesses what is required of him. It is needless to say that under such treatment many innocent men admit committing the crimes of which they are accused and go to jail, rather than suffer the horrors of the torture chamber. A man who has suffered this mode of torture once or twice becomes a marked man ever after. His thumbs get disfigured and become ball-shaped at the ends. The natural nails are cast off and deformed corrugated nails take their place. From these signs a smart police officer will always be able to recognise an old offender.

Now, my dear friends, I have let you into the secret of how my countrymen, the Bengalis, have gained the reputation of being smart police officers. They resort to torture as a substitute for detective ability. Take this engine of oppression away from them; give them no opportunity of manufacturing false evidence, and the Bengali becomes the worst policeman in the world. He has not the energy or courage necessary for real honest police duty.

I was considered a model detective. Here is how I was outwitted by a man who had no police training or experience whatever. But he had what I wanted, keen observation. He could scent danger afar off, and single out an enemy in the midst of a crowd. These are some of the qualities that go to make up the ideal detective. But these qualities are strangers to the Bengali. In craft, subtlety, and low cunning my countrymen can shame the devil. But a higher order of intellect is required for Scotland Yard.

Now for my story. I was selected by my superior to proceed to Chandbally to watch the doings on board a certain passenger steamer at that port. The steamer agents in Calcutta received certain information that their

people in charge of the vessel were in the habit of defrauding the Company by accounting for less passengers than were actually carried. In other words, the steamer was registered to accommodate a certain number of people; this number was frequently exceeded and the servants of the Company, so it was said, pocketed the excess fare. My duty was to travel occasionally as an ordinary passenger and count the number of people on board. This was to be done in such a manner as not to attract notice. Behold I had not been many hours on board when the man whose doings I had been sent to watch was busy watching my movements! He had never seen me before. But he singled me out from amongst the crowd as a person not to be trusted. What he saw in me or my movements different from any of the other passengers, I could never find out. But one thing is certain, he ought to have been in my place. He was a detective formed by nature's own cunning hand. The knowledge that I was being watched made me uncomfortable, so in order to avoid attracting attention I sat down on deck and began to smoke my *hubble-bubble*. I had my bundle, like any other passenger, by my side. When the steamer came to the landing ghât I was still seated smoking. I got up and followed the crowd on shore. The moment I had crossed the gangway I was collared by two constables, and ordered to open my bundle, I felt indignant at what I considered an insult and made some show of resistance. I was obliged, however, to yield and show what I had got with me. The sight fairly took my breath away! Some one had secreted, evidently when I was seated on deck enjoying my *hubble-bubble*, some articles belonging to the steamer in my bundle. I was charged with theft and sent before the Magistrate for trial. The strongest point against me was

refusing to open my bundle at the ghât when requested to do so. I was convicted and sentenced to undergo three months' rigorous imprisonment. My *sahib* did everything in his power to get me released. He even went up to Government for the purpose. But Government would not interfere with the sentence and directed him to apply to the High Court. This of course he was loath to do as it would expose the weakness of the police. So I had to serve out my time in jail. All my hopes of becoming a Deputy Magistrate were now at an end. I was ashamed to return to my friends and associates when released. I took to evil courses and drifted from bad to worse until at last I was obliged to flee from British India and seek safety in a native State. It is to these circumstances, my friends, you are indebted for the honour of sharing the company of the celebrated Bidyaratana, or the "gem of learning."

At the conclusion of the *darogá's* story the chief rose and announced to the assembled dacoits that the famous Tantia Bhil had fallen into the hands of the Philistines at last. The news was received with grief and dismay by every one present. Solomon Christian stood up and said, "Gentlemen, this is the first time in my life that I have had cause to regret being a Protestant convert. Had I been made a good Catholic instead I would have had three masses said for our famous brother Tantia." Hear! hear! and applause from the company which then broke up for the night.

---

## CHAPTER XI.

---

### THE STORY OF A PROFESSIONAL THUG.

THE *darogá* having finished his interesting narrative, for which he received a hearty round of applause, the chief called upon Charan Das for the next story; who, accordingly, very cheerfully began in this manner.

I am a *thug* by profession and the son of a *thug* by descent. The Grand Trunk Road, in the good old days before the snort of the iron horse was heard in the land of the Orient, was my happy hunting ground. Of all the free and independent professions of life that of the *thug* is the most exciting. No sportsman ever followed game with half the relish that a *thug* stalks his victim. That proverb which our friend, the Baboo, was taught in his youth, and which made such a deep impression on his mind, "Walk



twenty miles to serve the man you intend to ruin" must have originated from a professional *thug*. I have often walked forty miles to serve the man I intended to strangle. Bore him company, amused him with anecdotes, offered him *pan*, shared my food with him and even washed his feet at the end of our journey. If any victims could return from the land of Hades they would tell you that the pleasantest journey they ever undertook was in the company of a professional *thug*. So courteous, so gracious, so obliging, so full of wit and humour are the *thugs*, as a class, that, like certain poisonous snakes—the *cobra* for instance—they fascinate their intended victim before making their deadly spring. Taylor *Sahib* of the *Thuggee* Department has made a pretence of giving to the world the "Confessions of a *Thug*." The whole story is a gigantic hoax! No *thug* ever revealed the real secrets of his profession to any living being outside his own caste and calling. A real *thug* would suffer himself to be hanged, drawn and quartered before he would break the oath of secrecy to which he is bound to his order. Colonel Meadows Taylor's "Confessions of a *Thug*" are mere fictions of quacks and pretenders.

The young *thug* is taught the secrets of the art at a very early age. His father prepares a man of straw for the son to practice upon. The lad is then instructed how to introduce himself to a stranger; how to cajole him; how to insinuate himself into his confidence without exciting or awakening suspicion; how to ascertain his business; his destination; the amount of property on his person; his caste; his habits; whether he eats opium or smokes ganja. And when all these particulars are committed to memory the young *thug* is taught how to spring upon his victim; how to "noose" him; how to bring him to the

ground face downwards; how to secure a firm footing on his back; how to fasten the knees below his shoulder-blades in order to gain a better purchase to tighten up the "noose" on the neck; and as the last death quiver agitates the body of the expiring victim, the *thug* offers up a prayer of thangsgiving to the gods, appropriates the property of the deceased, and departs to fresh fields and pastures green.

It is a generally-received opinion amongst the official class in British India that the extermination of the *thugs* is due to the exertions of the Thuggee Department. Nothing is more fallacious. The railways have done more to make *thuggee* a non-paying profession than all the police in India. Men worth robbing don't now travel by road. They use the railway. And the *thugs* in consequence have been starved out. But if the railways have done so much towards the extermination of the *thugs* they have opened up new opportunities to the enterprising "speculator" to enrich himself at much less risk than that of strangling a man for his property. I would lay a wager that more men now live by their wits on the East Indian Railway than used to exist by *thuggee* on the Grand Trunk Road before the existence of railways. What do you think of that, my friends, in the face of our advanced civilisation?

I'll tell you how the trick is done, at least how I used to do it after I had given up *thuggee* as a non-paying profession. Provided with a neatly done-up bundle, the contents of which is of little or no value, I make my way to a railway station about an hour or so before the train is due to start. Here I find two or three hundred intending passengers seated in the third-class waiting room. From this number I select a likely victim. Take stock of

the size and make up of his bundle, and the colour of the wrapper. This done, I retire to a quiet corner and make up my bundle exactly like my friend's to all external appearance. I then sit down and wait patiently for the ticket bell to ring and in the meantime enjoy a quiet pull at the *hubble-bubble*. When the ticket bell sounds there is a general rush to the booking office. I keep well in rear of, but close to my game. I hear him name the station to which he is travelling, so I book for the same place. Having obtained my ticket, I follow my man into the same carriage and place my bundle under the same seat. Now it sometimes happens that an opportunity offers to exchange bundles and clear out before the distance for which you have taken a ticket is covered. Your victim may drop off to sleep, or get out at a station to answer a call of nature. These opportunities should always be taken advantage of. I was ever on the look out for favourable moments to make off with my booty and invariably succeeded. However, if no such chance presents itself, and you have to follow your game for the whole distance booked, the best plan is to endeavour to make the two bundles change places. This can be done with the feet without attracting the notice of the owner, and the moment the door of the carriage is opened in the terminal station, pick up your victim's bundle and mix with the crowd on the platform. The chances are your man is not in a very great hurry and waits till the rush is over before he leaves the vehicle. Then if he should notice the mistake, it is too late to rectify it, or if he is a little impatient and forces his way out in the general crush, he picks up the wrong bundle and carries it away without noticing the exchange until it is beyond remedy. It may so happen that the victimized individual, before



you get clear of the station premises, will raise an alarm and you are collared by the railway police or one of the station staff. In that case your best plan is to plead mistake, pointing out the resemblance the two bundles bear to each other, and offer to exchange with many apologies. This generally satisfies all parties. Should, however, the aggrieved person press the charge, no magistrate will convict, on seeing the two bundles compared. This, you will admit, is a much safer profession to follow than *thuggee*.

The best game to follow in these kind of cases is a Calcutta *durwan* going home to his country to be married. His bundle is sure to be well stocked with rich clothes and ornaments for his intended bride. These are the game to stalk on the up journey. But on the down trip the rich *bunniah* and the *koyar* offer most attraction.

While engaged in this business I came across an old "chum" with whom I had worked in concert in the *thuggee* line. He was returning home by rail to enjoy the fruits of his honest industry. He had secured, he assured me, quite an independence for life. "What" exclaimed I, in astonishment, "then *thuggee* is not played out after all?" "Ah" returned my friend, "I have given up *thuggee* long ago. I made my pile as a professional poisoner." "But" said I, "if the railways have ruined *thuggee* and rendered it a non-paying business would it not have the same effect on the professional poisoner? Both trades depend upon meeting with rich travellers, and as men with capital don't walk on foot in these days of rapid and cheap travelling no one worth poisoning is left on the Queen's highway." "That is true" returned my friend "if applied to our old hunting ground, the Grand Trunk Road. But I stumbled upon a rich vein of country, quite by accident I assure you. If you want to



make a fortune in a twelvemonth and retire, as I am doing, to marry and settle down for life, you could not do better than take up the run that I have just left."

I told my friend that I would be delighted to do so and asked him to let me into the secret, this is his story.

"After giving up *thuggee* I made a pilgrimage to Pooree, for the *thugs* are professionally a religious people. While there I had my eyes opened to the fortune that was to be made on the road between Cuttack and the sacred city. The country for miles in every direction is one vast Golgotha. Dead bodies are met with everywhere. From the inns by the wayside may be heard every hour of the day and night the groans of dying men and women. Cholera takes off thousands of pilgrims every year. Now it struck me at once, as it would any sensible man with an eye to business, that poisoning by arsenic and cholera exhibit the same symptoms. In both cases griping pains are developed followed by purging and vomiting. "Here," said I to myself, 'is the very place where a man of my profession can carry on his trade in peace and safety. Half-a-dozen of dead bodies found under a tree will excite no suspicion. Every case of poisoning will be put down to cholera. Even the victims themselves will attribute their symptoms to every cause but the right one.'"

"But stay, there is another secret I must put you in possession of. Secure your game on the road to the sacred city. If you let the priests get hold of them first they will not leave you a single bird worth plucking. Bear this in mind whatever you do. So now I will say 'salam' and hope when we next meet I will see you as rich as I am at this present moment." Here I took leave of my friend, went to a rest-house close by; lit my *hubble-bubble* and had a long and tranquilizing smoke. I pondered

deeply over what I had just heard. My deliberations resulted in a determination to visit Pooree and to Pooree I went. I spent some days in looking about me before commencing operations. I visited the "Holy Field" and all the temples in the neighbourhood. I passed through the great pagoda and saw the "Lord of the world;" His sister "Subhadra." The image of each is a rudely constructed, ill-shapen wooden bust, about six feet in height.

The image of Jagannath is painted white, that of Balaram black and of Subhadra yellow. The arms of Jagannath are mere stumps, while his divine sister has not even the sign of an arm. On the whole the great world lord and his brother and sister are the most hideous of all the gods in the Hindoo Pantheon. But though the ugliest they are the most devoutly worshipped by all good Hindoos.

I arrived at the sacred city on the day of the Snan Yatra or the bathing festival. The image of Jagannath was brought out from the temple in great state by the priests and placed in an open terrace amidst the deafening shouts of a hundred thousand voices. Water was then poured on the head of the deity while the priests chanted texts from their sacred books and the multitude of pilgrims shouted Jaya Jagannath! Jaya Jagannath! Victory to Jagannath! Victory to Jagannath! After the bathing ceremony, the idol is presented with rich offerings by innumerable votaries. He is then taken back to the temple.

The next great festival of Jagannath is the "Ratha Yatra" or car festival. This takes place in June or July. The three idols of Jagannath! Balaram and Subhadra are brought out from the temple and placed on *rathas* or cars. These cars are huge vehicles five storeys high, with

immense wheels, numerous turrets, figures and other decorations. The car of Jagannath is 50 feet high and rests upon 16 wheels each 7 feet in diameter. The car has a platform 40 feet square. The vehicles which convey Jagannath's divine brother and sister are not so large as that of the Great World Lord himself. But they are huge vehicles all the same. The ceremony of placing the idols in the cars is performed in the presence of hundreds of thousands of spectators. It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm of the pilgrims on this occasion. From myriads of throats issue Jaya Jagannath! Jaya Jagannath! accompanied by beating of tom toms and the sounding of horns, trumpets, &c.


The idols during this festival are supplied with arms, hands, feet and ears of solid gold, and diamond eyes. The moment I saw this gratifying sight, I gave up all idea of turning professional poisoner. I determined to enrich myself by stripping the idols, and set about forming plans for the enterprise. I sat up all night thinking the matter over. The gods would remain eight days in their cars and within that period, I thought, there would be no difficulty in maturing plans which would lead to successful results. The idols were well guarded both day and night and the undertaking was perilous in the extreme. Nevertheless I had made up my mind for the venture and no danger or difficulty would deter me from my purpose. At last I came to a decision while out taking observations one night. I noticed that a number of goats, kept for sacrificial purpose, used to take shelter under the cars. "That's how I must gain admittance" said I to myself, and I walked to my domicile and set about making the necessary preparations. I incased my body in the skin of a large goat and at midnight started on all fours, during



a heavy downpour of rain, for the cars. I reached them in safety and mounted to the idols. I commenced operations by extracting the eyes, which consisted of large diamonds. These I put into my mouth for safety. I next annexed the gold hands, arms, ears, &c., of the idols and prepared to depart. I had as much solid gold as I could carry, indeed more than was consistent with my safety, unfortunately. For, on letting myself down from one of the turrets I missed my footing and fell with a thud to the ground. The guards hearing the noise ran to the spot and collared me. In the fright I swallowed the diamonds. The priests were then woke up and I was made over to the custody of the police. Everything was recovered except the eyes of the idols. These I denied knowing anything about. In the morning a police *sahib* came to investigate the matter, and when he heard about the diamonds being missing he ordered me an emetic. I refused to take it, force was used, but it was no use they could not get me to swallow the medicine. So I was tied down on a *charpoy* (native cot) and given an injection instead. The diamonds were recovered. I was then ordered to be kept in the police lock up pending enquires regarding my antecedents. During the night following my arrest I pretended to want to answer a call of nature, and asked a chowkeedar on duty to take me to the closet, which was on the opposite side of the *thana* compound. To this request he was obliged to comply. On the way I sprang upon him as I used to spring upon my victims when following the profession of a *thug*, "noosed" him and brought him to the ground in the twinkling of an eye. I then made my escape. There was a large reward offered for my recapture. But I left British India and bid defiance to the myrmidons of the law. So here I



am in a free country, amongst a free people, where every man may do as he likes as long as he keeps in with the officials.



## CHAPTER XII.

## THE PIR'S STORY.

THE *Thug* having ended his narrative, amid tremendous applause, the chief next called upon Golam Imaum to continue the entertainment: now Golam Imaum was known amongst his friends as the *pir* (alchemist), consequently his story was looked forward to with as much interest as that of the *thug* and when he rose in obedience to his chief's command, and took up his position in the centre of the assembled free-booters, he was received with a perfect ovation. He thus began:—

I am a son of the great *pir* of Patna. My father, who had the reputation of possessing supernatural powers, fell a victim to the fury and superstition of the people during the great famine of 1873. He had a quarrel with a

zemindar (landlord), and out of revenge was supposed to have used his influence with the gods to bring about a season of great scarcity in order to prevent the raiyats (cultivators) paying rent to his enemy. How this story originated was never known, but when the people began to feel the pinch of poverty each one cast abroad for the cause of the dire calamity, and as nothing more probable presented itself to the popular mind than my father's quarrel with the landlord, he fell a victim to their fury. Our house was burned and razed to the ground. All my father's books and manuscripts relating to magic and alchemy perished in the general ruin. My mother and I alone escaped. She fled with me to Lucknow, where we found a home and friends amongst our own people.

When I became a man I adopted the profession of my forefathers, and set up as a *Pir*. Young as I was when my father's misfortune reduced us to dependence and poverty, I remembered one of his wise sayings, namely, 'A prophet is not without honour save amongst his own kindred and people,' and patting me on the head caressingly, he would say, "Now my good little boy, when you become a man deck yourself out in a mysterious <sup>garb</sup>~~garb~~, assume a grave face, a foreign accent, and profess to work miracles. Believe me, there is no limit to human credulity so long as you preserve your *incognito* and the secrets of your profession."

Acting upon this advice, I resolved, after completing the necessary outfit, to try my prentice hand on the well-to-do merchants and traders of the capital of India; and bent my steps for that famous city. I had not been long in Calcutta when an opportunity offered of putting my ingenuity to the test. A retired merchant who lived in a garden house in the suburbs had been on a pilgrimage,

and during his absence had shut up his house and dismissed his domestic establishment. On his return he found the house had been broken into by thieves and a large amount of property carried off. After consulting with some of his neighbours he was induced to seek the advice of the great *Pir*, as I was called. Accordingly the victim bent his steps towards my abode. I had been drawing magic circles on the floor of my hut when the retired merchant entered, and appeared too much absorbed to notice his presence. After waiting a short time and coughing—once or twice to attract my attention, without success, he grew impatient and thus began:—

“Oh! great sage, I have been robbed!”

“I know it,” replied I, without looking up. “I am just tracing the absconding thieves.”

“Great heavens!” exclaimed the victim, “you cannot possibly be aware of my misfortune, for I have only just discovered it myself.”

“O yes,” I made answer, “there is no secret hidden from a master of my profession, and I flatter myself I have thoroughly mastered the principles of my art.”

“Then you can assist me to discover the thieves and recover the property” queried the victim brightening up.

“Undoubtedly,” replied I. “But we had better proceed to the scene of the burglary and take up the chase from the point where the fox broke cover.”

The retired merchant led the way to his residence.

“I trust nothing has been moved since the crime was discovered,” said I, as we entered the house.

“Absolutely nothing,” replied the retired merchant.

“Because,” said I, “much depends on a careful study of the surroundings.”



The first thing that met our view on entering the house was a large teak-wood box which moved on four wheels. The lid, though of immense strength and firmly secured, had been burst open and the contents ransacked. "It was from that box," sobbed the victim, melting into tears, "all my money and valuables were stolen." I commenced my investigations by measuring a square inch of the dust-covered lid of the box. I next scraped together all the dust within the measured inch with a feather and put it very carefully into a pair of scales in order to ascertain its weight. "Let me see," said I, making a calculation and drawing magic circles on the floor. "Dust settles at the rate of 678,947,385th of an inch per hour. It is therefore exactly 84 hours, or three and-a-half days since the burglary was committed, or, say about midnight on Sunday last."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the retired merchant, drawing his hand across his eyes and emitting a snivel and a sigh. "How wonderful! It was on Sunday night I dreamed robbers were breaking into my house, and now, that you put me in mind of it, I woke up in a fright and behold it was just twelve o'clock!"

Proceeding into the back verandah I came across three plantain leaves, I pointed them out to the retired merchant with the remark, "This is where the robbers refreshed themselves after committing the burglary and before starting on their journey. You see there were three of them! One was an old man and a Brahmin, the other two were young and low caste men.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the retired merchant, "but how do you know that!"

"You see," said I, "all the pepper corns and improperly cooked müsallah are carefully collected and placed in

one corner of this plantain leaf. Only an old man without teeth would do that. The night was evidently windy and the old man prevented the plantain leaf from blowing away or curling up over his food by keeping his left hand pressed down upon it while he eat with his right. See the mark of the five fingers on the plantain leaf. Only a Brahmin would do that. The other two plantain leaves were held in their place by the feet of the robbers during the time they were eating. See the impression of the toes of both feet on each leaf. Only low caste men would do that. Besides there is not a scrap of the repast left on either plantain leaf. Only young men would lick their platters so clean."

The retired merchant beat his head after the Oriental fashion and exclaimed "*Shabash ! shabash !*" (Well done ! well done !)

"After the repast the robbers divided the spoil over which they had a quarrel," I continued.

"But how can you tell that?" queried the retired merchant. "You will observe," said I, "that the parties commenced to smoke after their repast. While thus engaged they began to deliberate on the division of the booty. The man who was smoking at the time was dissatisfied with the arrangement and dashed down the hookah on the floor with great force breaking the bowl into pieces and scattering about the contents. That the breaking of the hookah occurred after the repast is evident from the fact that some fragments of the broken bowl are scattered over the plantain leaves." This revelation elicited another exclamation of "*Shabash ! shabash !*" from the retired merchant.

I next pointed out some figures drawn on the ground with a piece of charcoal. "Let me see," said I, as I began

to work out the figures. "Yes, this," pointing to the figure at the head of the column, "just represents the fare by rail to Benares, and this sum, multiplied by three, represents the sum of the fares for the three robbers to the same place. They had evidently squared their differences before parting and all three started for Benares, where they will dispose of the gold and silver ornaments."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the retired merchant, quite bewildered. "Are you a magician?"

"Yes" replied I. "I have added the science of magic to my other accomplishments."

"What do you now propose I should do to arrest the robbers and recover my property?" queried the retired merchant.

"Why, of course," replied I, "send me off at once in pursuit. Let me see. It will require five hundred rupees, for personal expenses, bribes to the police, and other incidental charges, to bring back the fugitives. Hand this amount over to me, and I start for the holy city by the first train."

The proposal was agreed to and the money paid "down on the nail." "Mind," said I as I left the presence of the retired merchant, "keep this matter a profound secret, till you hear from me again!" The victim promised compliance, but up till this day he has been nursing the "secret" in silence and watching for my return, an event never likely to happen. When the old fellow is next visited by robbers I guess he'll apply to Lambert or my friend Hogg for assistance and shun *pirs* and magicians as he would poison.

My next adventure was with the gomasta of a native firm in Cotton-street, Burra Bazar. We first met at a



bathing-ghat on the Strand where I had been exhibiting to an admiring and astonished crowd the process of converting copper into gold; I singled out from amongst the spectators the gomasta, as a likely victim, and thus addressed him :

“Well, Baboojee, do you want me to double your worldly possessions for you?”

“Unfortunately I have no worldly possessions to double,” replied the Baboo, “I have only debts, and they are large enough already.”

“That is a pity,” continued I, “but I may be able to assist you to clear off your debts.”

“Oh ! Sir ” exclaimed the Baboo, brimming over with delight, “if you will do that I will pray for you on the bosom of holy Gunga every day of my life; I am now twenty-five years of age, and I have not been once married in all these years owing to my indebtedness.”

“Poor fellow,” said I, “I feel for you very much. What is your profession?”

“I am a poor clerk, sir, on rupees ten per month,” returned the Baboo.

“And who are your employers?” was my next question.

“Wealthy cloth merchants,” the Baboo made answer.

“Very good, I suppose you have access to your employers’ till occasionally,” I continued compassionately.

“Oh yes, sir,” was the prompt reply. “My employers have great confidence in my honesty.”

“Just so. Then why not bring me, say, rupees five hundred. I’ll convert it into a thousand before ~~your~~ <sup>your</sup> eyes. You can then restore the money to your master’s till and nobody will be the wiser, while you will be five hundred rupees a richer man than you now are.”



The bait took, the Baboo fell into the trap. Late that same evening he stole into my private domicile with five Government of India currency notes tied up very carefully in his waist cloth. At first he seemed rather reluctant to produce them, and timidly enquired how much the operation would cost him. I assured him that I never accepted a single dumree from any one for my services. "What is the use of money to me," said I, "a man who can convert copper into gold has no occasion to sell his services at so much per hour." The disinterested assurance restored the Baboo's confidence, and the notes were at once produced.

I commenced operations by folding the notes up in nine wrappers. In magic nine is a charmed number. This done I carefully sealed the outside wrapper, and then performed a mysterious ceremony over the package. During the ceremony, by a juggler's trick I substituted the package containing the notes for another precisely similar in appearance made up of waste paper. This I handed over to the dupe, told him to take it home, place it under his pillow, and go to sleep. When he awoke the next morning to break the seal and he would find ten Government currency notes of one hundred rupees each. The Baboo took the package, and after promising to pray for me on the bosom of holy Gunga every day of his life, hurried away, while I immediately set about shifting my quarters to another part of the city.

My next adventure was with a rich zemindar of Behar. I had been staying at a place called Sasseram, a town on the Grand Trunk Road, rendered famous as the burial place of Shere Shah and Selim, where the splendour of my equipage, a private palki carried by four stalwart bearers gorgeously attired, attracted a good deal of attention. While out one morning inspecting the celebraed

tombs of the place I accidentally met with the headman or zemindar. We entered into conversation and were soon interested in each other's history, I saw in my new acquaintance a likely victim. He had heard, he said, a good deal about *Pirs* and their wonderful powers, and would like to hear and know more. The result was I was invited to share his hospitality during my stay at Sasseram. I accepted the invitation with thanks and accompanied the zemindar to his house. It is needless to say my entertainment was all that could be desired. I was treated by the whole household with the respect due to a great sage. "Now, master," said my host one day as we were seated on a divan, sipping sherbet, "they tell me that anything you touch turns into gold. Is that so?"

"My son," said I, "you need not believe all you hear people say of me. You must be content to see and judge for yourself."

"Behold, while we were thus speaking the silver cup, that stood on the divan between us turned to gold! I managed by a juggler's trick to exchange it unnoticed while my host was settling his cushions. "Alla! Alla!" exclaimed the astonished zemindar when he noticed the change.

"Hush!" said I, "or you will alarm the household. I never make a parade of my wonderful powers. But in return for your kind hospitality, I intend before we part to show you that the wise can make even the spirits of the invisible world obedient to their will."

"Oh! master," continued my host, "if you will teach me the principles of your art, I will give you all I possess."

"I will teach you, my son," replied I, "the secret of

commanding untold wealth, but I cannot accept any remuneration in return. My knowledge is not for sale, it cannot be purchased with silver or gold."

This declaration on my part paved the way to the zemindar's confidence. It was made quite clear to him that I had no mercenary motives, and this difficulty mastered, the rest was all plain sailing. I represented that before enlisting a new disciple, it was necessary to ask advice from heaven, "Because" said I, "it would be an unpardonable offence against Alla to impart the secrets of our art to an unworthy disciple. I then took from a mysterious recess of the casket supposed to contain the secrets of my profession, a sheet of clean note paper, on which I had previously written with invisible ink the instructions the zemindar was to follow. "This," said I, handing the paper to my pupil, "you must place between the leaves of the Koran, and sleep with the book under your pillow to-night. To-morrow morning you will find written, by the finger of God, the course you are to pursue. But mind, whatever you do, do not let the sacred book out of your possession until you meet me in the morning." The zemindar promised compliance. When we met the following morning and the sacred book was produced, the writing on the paper had come out beautifully. True, the formation of the letters were not very regular, but I explained to the zemindar that the inhabitants of the invisible world were not very good with the pen, and generally wrote in a peculiar and crabbed hand. As an instance, I referred to the writing on the wall, by the finger of God himself, mentioned in Jewish history, when an expert had to be sent for to decipher the scrawl. This explanation quite satisfied my pupil, particularly as my instructions were plain enough and easily understood. They enjoined



upon the zemindar strict compliance with all that his preceptor required him to do, and approved of his selection as a disciple. It only remained now to give the finishing touch to my art and complete the game. I was not then aware it would prove such a dangerous one as it ultimately did. "We will commence our first lesson in magic," I explained to my pupil, "after prayers to-morrow," for the zemindar was a good Mussulman "by doubling all the money you are possessed of. By the way," continued I, "what sum of money have you at hand?"

"I have got ten thousand rupees, master, in notes and silver."

"That is rather a small sum to begin with," said I "could you not, by borrowing from some of your neighbours for the occasion, make it twenty thousand?"

"Oh, certainly, without any difficulty," was the prompt reply of the zemindar.


With this we parted for the day. On the morrow my pupil was ready with, in round numbers, rupees twenty thousand, mostly, in currency notes. I took the money, wrapped it carefully up, and placed it in my mysterious casket. This done I persuaded my pupil to partake of a glass of consecrated sherbet prepared by my own hands. "This will," I explained, "open to your astonished gaze all the glorious mystery which Jemsheed had ever known."

"I am entirely in your hands, master," said the zemindar resignedly.

The sherbet was drunk off. Ten minutes afterwards my pupil was lying insensible on the divan. I took up my casket, placed it in the palki, which stood at the door, and hastened away from the neighbourhood as fast as the bearers could carry me. A few days afterwards I dis-



covered, to my horror, that the zemindar never recovered from the effects of the sherbet. I had unfortunately miscalculated its strength, and the consequence was Government had offered a reward of a thousand rupees for my apprehension on a charge of administering a stupefying drug for the purpose of robbery. I managed for a time to elude detection but it cost me nearly all my ill-gotten wealth in bribes to the police. At last, driven to desperation by a pack of sleuth-hounds always at my heels, I bolted from British territory and joined this honourable band of dacoits, amongst whom I have lived in peace and security ever since.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE HISTORY OF A "SUTTEE."

THE Pir having finished his story amidst deafening applause, the chief called upon Ameer Ali, *alias* Seettoo, to relate the history of his experience before becoming a dacoit; whereupon he thus began.

I was born at Goruckpore, of Brahmin parents. According to the custom of my country and caste I was married at an early age to a young girl of my own village named Hoomulia. At the time of our marriage I was sixteen and my wife only ten years of age. As we were neighbours' children we used to play together and I grew to be very fond of Hoomulia, who was a sweet, dear winning child, even before our marriage. At the age of eighteen I was sent to service in Calcutta, in order to

enable me to support a wife when she came of age to join her husband. I had been two years in Calcutta when I received a letter from my parents reminding me that my wife was of age, and like a good Brahmin, I should hurry home at once and consummate my marriage. I had a good appointment at the time and did not wish to throw it up until I could arrange for a substitute who would be willing to work during my absence, and vacate the appointment on my return to Calcutta. I replied to my parents' letter, to this effect. In the meantime the family priest had fallen in love with my wife, and in order to effect his purpose gave out that I had died in Calcutta of cholera. Hoomulia was at this time only fourteen years of age. The news of my death was a terrible shock to the dear girl. She did not shed many tears or make a great outcry, her grief was too deep for either. But she voluntarily came forward and declared she would die a suttee!

Her father, Puttan Tewary, was at this time absent in another part of the country. Her nearest relations present on the occasion were two uncles named Sheolall and Bhichook. They tried to persuade the girl against her resolve and explained the risk they would incur by assisting or countenancing the sacrifice. Hoomulia had, however, put her hand to the plough and was determined not to look back.

"Let her have her own way" pleaded a sympathetic neighbour named Haripal a Rajpoot. "If the widow wishes to burn herself with her husband's sandals it would be sinful in you, her uncles, to thwart her. The bereaved heart knows best wherein its own consolation lies."

"Ah my friend," returned Bhichook, "and herein rests

the difficulty. The girl is too young to think for herself in such matters. She cannot understand the fearful nature of the sacrifice that religion and caste impose on Hindoo women. Suppose for instance, her courage gave way at the last moment what a disgrace it would be to all her kindred and people!"

"Make that point clear to her now" said another neighbour, named Ijrail. "Tell her plainly that after once consenting to become a suttee, she will not be permitted to change her resolve when the supreme moment arrives."

Bhichook and Sheolall had a long consultation on the subject of the suttee. They were more concerned about the after consequences to themselves, should the matter come to the ears of the authorities, than they were for the sufferings of their niece. It was therefore out of consideration of their own necks they tried to dissuade the girl from her intent.

"You will not be able to bear the excruciating pain of the fire, Hoomulia. You have no conception of the fearful agony you will have to suffer. Besides the British Government have prohibited suttee, and only think of the consequences to all who assist you in the sacrifice, should the police come to hear of the matter, pleaded Sheolall."

"The British Government have no right to interfere with our religious customs," returned Hoomulia. "Better to die on the funeral pyre with our husbands than drag out the long and miserable existence of a Hindoo widow. What is life worth to me without happiness; and how is happiness possible without a husband? My sun has gone down while it is yet noon, and will never rise again. The fountain of my heart, with its affections and desires



is for ever dried up. Hope, that sustains all others under the severest trials, has no place in the breast of the widow. Her whole life is one continued midnight; without the remotest prospect of a dawn." Then burying her face in her hands as if to shut out the terrible picture too dreadful to contemplate, she exclaimed, "Oh, *Vidhatta!* what sin have I committed that I should be visited with so heavy a calamity? Don't I fear and worship the gods? Don't I respect Brahmins? Don't I practise all our religious ceremonies? Don't I give alms to the poor according to my means? Why then should the gods have taken away my husband? And what is life without a husband? Oh! uncle I must die"; was the wail of the widow. "The pain, I fully understand, will be great, but it will be soon over!"

Hoomulia's tone was firm and decided, and the uncles, believing she had a call from heaven, deemed it a sin to thwart her purpose.

"But remember, said Sheolall, if your courage give way at the last moment you will not be permitted to back out of the undertaking. Are you quite certain your resolution will not forsake you when you see and feel the dreadful flames about your ears."

"Never!" answered Hoomulia with decision. "I know what I seek—a home with my husband in the land beyond the bright sunset, and I must reach it through fire and flame, or not at all. Do not, therefore, either try to dissuade me from my purpose or excite my fears further."

Sheolall and Bhichook found it was useless to reason further with their niece on the subject, and so resolved to let her have her own way.

"This is Heaven's call, depend upon it brother" said Sheolall to Bhichook, "and since the girl has come for-

ward and voluntarily offered herself a sacrifice to the gods it would be wicked in us to prevent her. We must hope, that since she is acting under celestial inspiration, Heaven will make her passage through the fiery ordeal a comparatively easy one."

This reasoning seemed to satisfy Bhichook, and the two uncles set about preparing the funeral pyre. When all was ready Hoomulia ascended it with great courage as if she would encounter death as her bridegroom, and hug it in her arms! All the people in the neighbourhood for miles around had collected to witness the ceremony, and when they had seen the girl's resolution they rent the air with cheers of encouragement: calling out "Brave Hoomulia! brave Hoomulia!"

When the plaudits of the crowd had ceased Hoomulia recited the following passages from MANAVA DHARMA SASTRA :—

A faithful wife, who wishes to obtain in heaven the mansion of her husband, must do nothing unkind to him, be he living or dead.

"Let her emaciate her body, by living voluntarily on pure flowers, roots and fruit; but let her not, when her lord is deceased, even pronounce the name of another man.

"Let her continue till death forgiving all injuries, performing harsh duties, avoiding every sensual pleasure and cheerfully practising the incomparable rules of virtue, which have been followed by such women, as are devoted to only one husband.

"Many thousands of Brahmans, having avoided sensuality from their early youth, and having left no issue in their families, have ascended, nevertheless, to heaven; and, like those abstemious men, a virtuous wife ascends

ascends to heaven, though she have no child, if, after the decease of her lord, she devote herself to pious austerity or purifies her soul by fire. .

"But a widow, who from a wish to bear children, slights her deceased husband by marrying again, brings disgrace on herself, here below, and shall be excluded from the seat of her lord hereafter.

"A married woman, who violates the duty which she owes to her lord, brings infamy on herself in this life, and, in the next, shall enter the womb of a jackal, or be afflicted with elephantiasis and other diseases with which the gods punish crime.

"While she, who slights not her lord; but keeps her mind, speech, and body, devoted to him, attains his heavenly mansion, and by all good men is called *sadhwi* or virtuous.

"Yes; by this course of life it is that a woman whose mind, speech, and body are kept in subjection, acquires high renown in this world, and, in the next, the same abode with her husband.

"A twice born woman who observes all the sacred ordinances of her caste, must burn with hallowed fire and fit implements of sacrifice, her body, with the sandals of her lord, before she can enter the abode of the blessed.

"No sacrifice is allowed to a woman apart from her husband, no religious rite, no fasting; as far only as a wife honours her lord, so far she is exalted in heaven.

"I have done; so now kindle the sacred fire and perform the funeral rites."

The pyre was then fired by Sheolall, and the dry wood saturated with *ghee*, was immediately in flames. This was fearful agony to endure, and the young widow writhing in pain jumped from the pyre and attempted to



escape! Oh! horror of horrors' Picture to yourself, my dear friends, for I cannot describe the consternation and dismay of the girl's relatives. "Shamed and disgraced for ever!" was the passionate exclamation of the uncles. The two men ran forward, seized the girl by the hands and feet and flung her back into the flames! Though there were thousands of spectators present not a word of remonstrance was raised against this brutal and inhuman act. In fact the sympathy of the multitude was all the other way!

The girl was frightfully burnt by this time and her clothes entirely consumed; nevertheless she made a second effort to escape. There was a water course leading from a well close by and into this the poor girl flung herself. Her body was covered with large blisters produced by the heat, which kept bursting with a noise like a pop gun, and her back, which had been most exposed to the flames, presented the appearance of cooked meat! She was too far gone to be carried back to the pyre, by the hands and feet as on the first occasion and one of the spectators offered a sheet. This was spread out and the victim persuaded to leave the water course and lie down upon it.

But Hoomulia divining their intentions begged to be allowed to die where she was. "Ah! uncle I cannot suffer to be burnt to death. Do have merey on me!"

"I swear by the holy Gunga, Hoomulia" replied the uncle, "that if you will lie down upon this cloth I will convey you home at once. Your body is in such a state that you cannot be carried in any other way."

Upon this assurance the poor girl lay down upon the cloth, the corners of which were immediately tied together, and a bamboo placed through the loop. In this way



Hoomulia was carried back to the pyre and flung a second time into the flames! The sheet in which she was bound up was soon consumed, and she made a third attempt to escape, but fell exhausted a few feet from the burning pile. With a view to put an end to her misery, a bystander offered a spear to one of her relations, and just as the latter was about to plunge it through the girl's heart I sprung upon the scene, wrenched the weapon from the hands of the would-be assassin, and used it on the crowd with the fury of a maniac. A shout went up from the spectators "The ghost of Hoomulia's dead husband! The ghost of Hoomulia's dead husband!" and the multitude melted away like magic, terrified and panic-stricken.

As soon as I found myself alone I turned to Hoomulia, she was dead! I arrived only a few minutes too late to save her! All I could do now for the poor girl was to gather up her remains and dispose of them as reverently as possible. Looking around I discovered a sheet that had been dropped by some one of the late spectators. In this I rolled up the body of Hoomulia, and carried it to the village well. "Yes" I said to myself as I gazed upon the most valuable possession of the people—pure water. "I'll pollute it with the victim of their own crimes!" I then lowered the body into the well, this done I took off my Brahmanical threads and threw them after the corpse, exclaiming as I did so, "Henceforth I am a follower of the Prophet, and Alla is my god!"

I stood for a moment to consider my next move when I was startled by a low moan of pain in my vicinity. I went to the spot and discovered that the sound proceeded from a man lying on the ground, face downwards. I turned him over, and recognised Hoomulia's uncle Sheo-lall. The soul and body were about to part company

The sight somewhat unnerved me, and my rage for vengeance turned to pity for the victims of my late fury. I counted the number of bodies lying round the funeral pyre, "nine" I repeated to myself "a lucky number, I must nevertheless provide for my own safety. The news of the *suttee* and its fatal termination will spread like wild fire, and we will have the police here in no time.

I fled for safety to the jungle and having disguised myself as a *jogee* returned, and took up my abode at a Hindoo temple in the neighbourhood, to watch the proceedings of the police. The Magistrate and *darogah* were the first to arrive, and the people were persuaded to return to their homes. Most of them did so, however, in mortal dread of the *bhoot* of Hoomulia's husband who they believed was still lurking about for more victims. The first step taken by the Magistrate was to have the bodies of the unfortunate men who had been killed examined by the civil surgeon. This functionary after an elaborate and patient *post-mortem* examination of each body arrived at the conclusion that the men came by their death by spear wounds inflicted by some person or persons unknown, and further that the spear produced by the police said to have been found near the spot where the massacre took place would produce the wounds he observed.

This question settled the Magistrate and, Superintendent of Police set about discovering the 'great unknown,' who had used the spear with such fatal effect. The people one and all declared the murderer to be no other than the *bhoot* of Hoomulia's husband! Witness after witness was examined, but all testified to the same effect. The Magistrate put the question to an old man, who appeared the most intelligent and rational individual in the village. "Why should Hoomulia's *bhoot* murder nine

innocent men, most of them related to the unfortunate girl who had voluntarily sacrificed herself to join her dead lord in the next world?"

"It is very clear to us, *khudawand*" (my lord), was the old man's reply; "the *bhoot* of Hoomulia's husband was so pleased with the girl's devotion to his memory, that he killed nine, for nine is a lucky number, of her kinsmen and neighbours to bear her company to the next world!"

The Magistrate threw down his pen in disgust, and turning to the European police officer said, "Well, Boyce, what do you think of that statement?"

"Its absurd, of course," returned Boyce, "but I am convinced, nevertheless, that the witness believes every word of what he has just told us."

"Then what's to be done?" queried the Magistrate, "we can't hang a *bhoot*."

Boyce laughed and said, "No faith, besides you would have to catch him first."

"I'll tell you what," continued the Magistrate, "I'm of opinion that the native police, if left to themselves, will make a better job of the case than we are likely to do."

"That is exactly my opinion" Boyce made answer.

The native *darogah* was accordingly called in and told to take up the enquiry, and submit a faithful report to his superior.

Now the advent of a *dorogah* in a country village, with a big case to dispose of, is regarded by the people with the same horror almost as a gang of dacoits. The enquiry was prolonged for nearly a month, the *darogah* submitting the most conflicting reports of the case. One day one family was accused of being responsible for the murder, and the next day evidence was produced impli-



cating a totally different set of men. Thus the 'squeezing' process went on until every family in the village had been cleared out. Then the *darogah* began to think that something must really be done to satisfy the sahibs, otherwise he would lose his reputation as a smart police officer. There were two low caste men who lived in a miserable hut bordering on a stretch of jungle about a mile from the village. These unfortunate creatures eked out a precarious existence by procuring and selling the skins of animals that had either been killed by tigers or died of disease. In fact, they were often suspected of poisoning cattle for the sake of the hides, and were consequently hated by the Hindoos. The *darogah* would have no difficulty in shunting the responsibility of the crimes on these two men, as the Hindoos were ready to swear anything against them to get them out of the way.

Accordingly the spear found close to where the men were murdered was identified as belonging to the two *chamars* or low caste men. It was frequently seen in their possession, the witnesses alleged, when going into the jungle to look for dead animals. They carried it as a protection in case they were surprised by a tiger or chetta. Then the motive for the murders was a very strong point against the accused. Shortly before this event a Brahmini bull, an animal held sacred by the Hindoos, died from the effects of snake bite. The *chamars* were accused of poisoning it, but the Magistrate refused to convict, as there had been no *post-mortem* examination, and therefore no evidence as to the cause of death. Some of the murdered men took an active part in getting up this poisoning case against the *chamars*. And the latter out of revenge sprang upon their enemies while they were engaged in the performance of a religious rite, and could not defend



themselves, as it would amount to pollution to touch a low caste man at such a time. They were further charged with disturbing and dishonouring a religious ceremony, to wit the burning of the body of a girl named Hoomulia according to Hindoo custom, who had died of cholera; and polluting and rendering noxious a valuable well by throwing the half burned corpse into it. The sheet, in which the remains of the *suttee* was tied up, was also shown to belong to one of the *chamars* by the *dhoby* mark!

The case was now complete. The evidence, both circumstantial and direct, against the *chamars* was irresistible; no one could doubt it. The Government Pleader who was also a native, argued that no Hindoo would interfere with the burning of a body. It would be an unpardonable sin to do so. No Hindoo would defile a well, and no Hindoo would defile himself by touching a dead body. The *chamars* were low caste men and would do all that they had been accused of doing.

The two *chamars* were consequently convicted 'on the strongest evidence' and suffered the extreme penalty of the law. The *darogah* was promoted to inspector, for the able manner in which he had worked up the case, and placed in charge of an important sub-division.

I made my escape from the neighbourhood without being recognised, and having no further motive for living an honest and respectable life, joined a band of dacoits and turned Mahomedan.

---

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE ASTROLOGER'S STORY.

AMEER ALI *alias* Seettoo having recited his experiences, which were listened to with much interest, especially by the Hindoo converts to Mahomedanism, the chief called upon the *Acharya* (the Astrologer) for the next story. Surya Kanta, for that was the name of the astrologer, was a noted character, and, though a Hindoo and a Bengali, was regarded by the whole fraternity, with a feeling of superstitious awe. No expedition was ever undertaken without first consulting the astrologer. It was the duty of the *Acharya* to study the heavens and fix the auspicious nights for every undertaking. Hence, the history of this mysterious personage was looked forward to with great eagerness. Accordingly, when the chief

called upon him for the next story there was loud cheering and great clapping of hands. He thus began :—

“I am a native of Moorshedabad in the province of Bengal, and a descendant of a noted family of astrologers. Like a good Hindoo I stuck to my caste and followed the profession of my fathers. I was an only son, and at the age of eighteen, in consequence of my father's death, succeeded to the title of *Acharya* to a large and populous district. By the time I was twenty-five I had gained a reputation for casting nativities and working out horoscopes, even, exceeding that of any of my predecessors. At this time I determined to adopt another lucrative profession in addition to that of *Acharya*—namely, Diviner or predictor of future events. (Bengali-*Ganatkáran*.) If a woman lost an ornament; or a cow strayed away and could not be found, I was supposed to be able to put the owners on the right track in both cases. If a child had fits; or an adult was down with fever, or a married woman proved barren; or brought forth girls instead of boys, I was supposed to be able to tell, with unfailable certainty, the cause of these misfortunes, and provide a remedy. Though my predictions often turned out false, the common people were not shaken in their belief in my supernatural powers. For such is human credulity, that in divination, the failures are soon forgotten, and the successes carefully remembered for all time. One notable instance of this kind is worth relating. On the first appearance of the great comet of 1858 I predicted that there would be a mighty famine in the land followed by sore pestilence, which actually happened. This chance shot raised me to the highest pinnacle of fame as a diviner, and ever after, all the people, both Hindoos and Mahomedans, high and low, rich and poor, learned and un-



learned, regarded my predictions as infallible. My fame spread far and near, till at last it reached the ears of the Rajah of Jynteah. This potentate had been married some six years, but his queen had given him no children. This was a great disappointment. They loved each other well, but, notwithstanding that love, felt a void and emptiness in life which only those who are denied the presence of children can ever know or feel.

“For six years Rajah and Ranee had sighed together in silence and tried every means indicated by superstition to remedy their misfortune. A human sacrifice had been offered every year either to *Kali* or *Doorga*, but all to no purpose. The gods turned a deaf ear to their supplications and the loving wife continued barren.

“At last, the Rajah having heard exaggerated accounts of my supernatural powers, determined to consult me regarding his wife’s unfruitfulness. His Prime Minister with a large and brilliant retinue were sent to fetch me. I was not told for what purpose the Rajah wanted me until I found myself in his presence, otherwise I might have objected to the undertaking. But now finding myself face to face with a man who was all powerful in his own kingdom I deemed it prudent, out of consideration for my own neck, to act in conformity to his wishes. Accordingly, after hearing his story and the steps that had been taken, and failed, to cure his wife’s sterility, I intimated that I would take three days to consider the matter and consult the gods. In the meantime I made private enquiries regarding the Rajah’s mode of life before his marriage. It turned out that from a very early age, he had indulged in all kinds of dissipation, by which his constitution was ruined and enfeebled. I had now gained all the information I required and at the end of



three days presented myself before the Rajah. As the interview was of a private nature I was received without ceremony, but with much kindness and condescension. Having made my obeisance and touched the ground three times with my forehead I cried out:—‘Oh Maharajah, (Great King!) I am commissioned by the gods to convey to thee and thy spouse glad tidings of great joy. Mother *Shashthi*, who represents the sixth part of the divine essence of *Pradhana-Prakriti*, the male and female creative principles, by whose influence the entire universe is peopled, will give you a son and heir on condition that your wife performs certain *pujas*, and that you set up an image of the goddess under a *Vata* tree (*Ficus Indica*) and cause it to be worshipped every month, on the sixth day of the waxing moon, by all the maidens and married women who have not been blessed with children, within a radius of one *khos* from your capital. Your wife on the same day, will be taken in a *palkee* (palanquin) to the goddess to worship, and from thence to the temple of holy of holies, where a *phulsayya* (flower bed) must be prepared to receive her. Here she will remain in a trance for several hours. On recovering consciousness I will administer the sacrificial rice (rice cooked in clarified butter) on swallowing which she will become *enciente* and in due course bring forth a son as bright as the morning, and as brave as a *bagh* (tiger).

“The Rajah, of course consented to all my proposals, and everything was in readiness for the first great *puja* on the sixth day of the waxing of the moon. The *Ranee* (queen) was carried in state from the palace to the *vata* tree and from there to the temple of the holy of holies. Here, dressed as a bride, she was laid on the *phulsayya* (a marriage bed decorated with flowers). The palanquin

bearers and other attendants having received *sayyatolana* (offerings or presents made to those who assist in putting a bride to bed) retired, and I was left alone with the Ranee to celebrate the *putresktiyaga* and administer the sacrificial *charu*. I commenced the ceremony by placing the right hand of the Ranee in my left and making her repeat after me the legend in connection with the worship of the goddess *Shashthi*; and concluded by impressing upon the fair devotee the necessity of keeping what transpired between us a profound secret. The queen was graciously complaisant, and promised to conform to the advice of her spiritual guide in everything.

“The ceremony over the Ranee was told she could now retire to the *zenana* (female private apartments) but, looking modestly down, she exclaimed “Oh! *Acharya mahasya*, *Shashti* is such a nice sweet goddess, if I may be permitted, I will perform one more *puja* in her honour before leaving the temple. Permission being granted the ceremony was repeated. But oh! horror of horrors! at this moment the old family priest, who had been all the time concealed behind the idols, stood before us! The Ranee screamed and fainted. I stood beside the *phulsayya* petrified with horror! My heart actually ceased to beat and the very life blood froze in my veins! The priest raised his finger, and by way of mockery cried, ‘*Ulu! ulu! ulu!* Your fate is sealed!’ With this he turned on his heel and left the temple! During his absence I might have made my escape, but I was so paralysed with fear that, for the life of me, I could not put one foot before another. The priest soon returned with the Rajah and the chief officers of his household. I fell at their feet and craved for mercy. ‘Take the impostor away’ said the Rajah to the officer of the guard ‘and roast him alive!’

I was taken to a cell and locked up for the night. The next morning I was brought forth to undergo the punishment passed upon me by the Rajah, when, fortunately, we encountered a Frenchman preparing to send up a balloon for the amusement of the State officials, who had collected in large numbers to see the *tamasha*! I made a great outcry, and said, 'See, gentlemen, a Brahmin is about to lose his life for a very trifling offence, will no one present intercede for him?' The Frenchman, horror-stricken at the severity and cruelty of the punishment; but not wishing to interfere with the Rajah's private affairs, facetiously remarked, 'Your Majesty, allow me to suggest an amendment to the wretched man's sentence.' 'Very good,' replied the Rajah, 'what is your suggestion?' 'We will send the criminal up in the balloon' returned the Frenchman. The idea seemed to tickle the fancy of the Rajah and his court; for the Frenchman's proposal was hailed with a burst of applause. My escort was ordered to halt and I was made to sit down till the balloon was ready to ascend. The moment I discovered what they were going to do with me, I made a greater outcry than ever, and begged to be taken to the oven and roasted alive, and not sent direct to *Shaitan* (the devil) in the Frenchman's wind bag.\* But no one paid any attention to my entreaty. Many questions were put to the Frenchman as to what would become of me when I got up amongst the clouds. The foreigner explained that I would be absorbed into the planet Mercury, the heat of which was ten thousand times greater than any fire ever kindled by man. The Rajah's lip curled with a vindictive smile on learning what my fate would shortly be. I went off into a swoon.

\* Fact.



“When I recovered consciousness I was rushing northwards at the rate of fifty miles an hour, at an elevation so great that I could distinguish nothing on the earth’s surface ; not even the rivers or lakes. My spirits became so elated, the effects of the rarified air, that all feelings of fear completely left me. Would you actually believe it ? I had so far forgotten my own danger that I began to think of the Ranee, and wondered what punishment she would receive for her part in the intrigue. Poor little thing she really believed that all she went through was part of the ‘ceremony’ prescribed for the worship of the goddess *Sashthi* !

“I had now entered a strata of cold air and I began to shiver and my teeth to chatter. I could feel the balloon descending. Looking down I could distinctly see snow-capped mountains, but I soon left them behind, and the cold also. Evening was now approaching and I watched the sun declining in the West. Suddenly the balloon entered a damp and heavy atmosphere. It grew less in size, and I fancy there was an escape of gas somewhere, for it began to descend rapidly. I was soon able to distinguish trees and villages, and at last found myself safe and sound on *terra firma*. Some peasants were working in a field where the balloon descended, but they fled in terror, leaving their bullocks, at the sight of the Frenchman’s wind bag. I was not long, however, in discovering that I had landed in Burmah. Looking round, I saw at a short distance, a Buddhist temple, to which I immediately directed my steps. I found the priest engaged at his devotions as I approached the holy place, and sat down on the steps till he was disengaged. When he came out he recognised me as a native of India and addressed me in Bengali. I rose and saluted him. He



then inquired from whence I came. I told him I was an astrologer by profession and had just concluded a tour through space, making observation of the stars and other heavenly bodies for the purpose of advancing science. He was astonished, and at first, disinclined to believe my story. But on seeing the balloon in which I had travelled, and hearing from the cultivators that they had seen me drop from the clouds, he was no longer incredulous. The news of my extraordinary journey through space spread like wild fire, and thousands of people flocked to the temple to see me. King Thebaw, who was then maturing a plot to drive the English out of British Burma, on learning from his wise men and magicians that a celebrated astrologer had dropped from the clouds, and was putting up at a temple in his dominions, sent a confidential official to consult me regarding the success or otherwise of the contemplated enterprise. I had heard a good deal of the arbitrary and cruel treatment the Burmese astrologers received at the hands of old King Thebaw and was consequently very guarded in my conversation with his envoy. It was a custom with the King, when he consulted an astrologer, if the latter did not predict according to his wishes, he was put to death in order to prevent him bringing about that which he had foretold. On the other hand, if the astrologer prophesied in accordance with the King's desire he was kept a State prisoner to ensure the fulfilment of the prophecy. If the thing predicted actually took place the astrologer was set at liberty and loaded with rich presents, but if he failed he was roasted alive as an impostor. Under these circumstances I considered it best to have nothing to do with King Thebaw or his Minister, and began to devise means of escape from Burmah. I consequently asked for six days' time to consult the

stars before giving a reply to the King's messenger. The latter consenting presented me with a rich ruby from the King's mines as an auspicious token of the favourable reply he hoped to carry back to his royal master. This concluded our interview. That night I made my escape from the temple, and succeeded, after a long and weary journey, in reaching Rangoon, without accident or molestation. Here I sold my ruby and with the proceeds paid my passage, by steamer, to Calcutta, from whence I travelled by foot to my native town.

“The glorious orb of day was sinking in the West as I reached the village tank, on the banks of which, I had, as a boy, sported and played, with the children of the neighbourhood; all now, like myself, grown into men and women. There was the *tulasi* plant I had so often worshipped after my ablutions, just as I left it a little more than a year ago. A little further on, on the opposite side of the *ghat*, I could see the sacred *Sripal* (*Ægle marmelos*) tree, under the shade of which, a number of women, supporting *kalasis* on their waists, had collected. They had come to draw water from the tank and were retailing the village *gup* before separating. I approached the coterie unnoticed. I heard my own name mentioned. I stopped and listened with bated breath. Yes there was no doubt about it; the subject of their conversation had reference to myself. One woman said to another, ‘I wonder if it is true that the *Acharya* was put to death by the Rajah for falling in love with his wife?’ ‘Oh! yes’ was the reply of the party addressed, ‘there is no doubt about it. The *jamidar* (*zemindar* or landlord) wanted to have his son's horoscope cast before the ceremony of the child's first rice, and sent his brother *Badan* in search of *Surya Kanta*. *Badan* was told on reaching the Rajah's territory, that the *Acharya* was sent up into

the clouds in a wind bag and has never been heard of since.' A murmur of sympathy for the sad fate of the unfortunate astrologer escaped from all who heard the story. 'And what became of the poor Ranee?' enquired another coterie. 'Oh! She was made a cold *suttee* of'\* was the reply.

"I tried to choke back a sigh, for I knew what cold *suttee* meant, and in doing so was forced to cough outright. The women looked round, recognised me, screamed, and dropping their water vessels, fled in terror to their homes, calling out Acharya's *bhuta*! (ghost) Acharya's *bhuta*! Acharya's *bhuta*! I stood my ground like one petrified, unable to move or breathe. At this time a cultivator came up with a plough on his shoulder. I tried to speak, but my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth. I could only gasp without uttering a single sound! The man stopped short, looked at me intently for a moment, then threw down his plough and bolted for his life. He, too, had recognised me. As I gradually recovered from my surprise, the terrible reality of my situation burst upon me like a thunder clap. I saw in an instant that 'Othello's occupation was gone.' That night I determined to leave the home of my fathers for ever; and carried out my resolution before crow-cawing the following morning.

I wandered on, without aim or object, not knowing or caring whither I went or what became of me. I looked upon myself as an outcast, an object of terror to all who ever knew me; till at last, driven to desperation, I joined this celebrated band of dacoits.

\* See "Every Man His Own Detective," Part III, Chapter V—undetected crime—for an account of "cold *suttee*."

## CHAPTER XV.

---

THE STORY OF AN ESCAPED CONVICT FROM  
THE ANDAMANS.

THE Astrologer having concluded his story in the midst of tremendous applause and violent clapping of hands, the chief, looking round, cast his eyes upon Mundal Khan, whom he requested to continue the entertainment by a recital of his adventures before becoming a dacoit.

Whereupon Mundul Khan began in this fashion:—

I am an inhabitant of Mynponry and the son of an influential zemindar. My father is the leading Mahomedan resident of the town of Puphoond, the population of which is about equally divided between Hindoos and the followers of the Prophet. There were, consequently, frequent quarrels between the two sects. If the Maho-



medans killed a cow the Hindoos would rise in a body and attack the hated beef-eaters; and if the Hindoos carried an idol past a Mahomedan mosque a harvest of broken and bloody heads was the result.

But matters came to a crisis when the Dusserah and Mohurram festivals fell on the same date. The authorities responsible for preserving the public peace sent for the heads of the two factions and endeavoured to persuade them to come to some understanding with each other so as to avoid a collision. The suggestion was a good one, and two *punchayets* were accordingly organised, one by the Hindoos and the other by the Mahomedans. After some deliberation the Hindoos promised not to carry the *Ram Seeta* round the town, but the Mahomedans could not be induced to alter the arrangements of former years. "They would," they said "carry their *tazzahas* by the same route they had always marched," and so no definite settlement could be arrived at. The Mahomedans believed that the Hindoos would play them false at the last moment. "For," said some of the elders, "if they are sincere and really mean to keep their promise not to carry the *Ram Seeta* through the town, how are they to get it to the temple of *Rowan*, which they have erected in a *bágh* very close to the *tukyá* of our *fakirs*? Depend upon it the Hindoos are only up to their old games, They think we cannot see through their little artifice. But we will turn out prepared for the worst for all that." So the eventful day arrived. The Hindoos in spite of their promise turned out in large numbers to follow the procession. Fully expecting to meet with opposition, the processionists were all armed. They commenced their march through certain streets where the Mahomedans had erected their *tazzahas*. The police interfered and tried to

change the route by which the Hindoos were proceeding to the *bágh* but without success. The Mahomedans collected in force, all armed to the teeth, and ready for an affray. The supreme moment arrived when the Hindoo procession reached the Mahomedan *tukya*. Some of the latter remarked—"If you don't stop polluting the atmosphere with the breath of your *conch*, we'll cram cow's flesh down your throats and break your idols into pieces." The Hindoos retorted by calling the Mahomedans pig-eating dogs. "Down with the unbelievers," shouted the Mahomedans, and at it they went, hammer and tongs. The police, who had up to this time, endeavoured to preserve the public peace, beat a hasty retreat and left the two factions to settle the matter in dispute in their own way. The fight lasted for several hours, a number of men were killed outright, several permanently maimed, and hundreds wounded, many severely. The idols of the Hindoos and the *tazzahas* of the Mahomedans were smashed to pieces, while half the town was reduced to ashes.

All this time the police, who were under the orders of a native inspector, did nothing till the European officials arrived upon the scene. Then the ringleaders were arrested and the rioters dispersed. All the leading men of both factions were committed to the sessions, and most of them, after a long and expensive trial, were found guilty and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. I was sent to the Andamans for seven years. I did not take kindly to a life of exile in a convict settlement and pined for freedom. Any kind of existence, I thought, would be better than the hateful restraint to which I was subjected. So, at the last, I resolved upon making my escape or perishing in the attempt.

One night when all was quiet I stole out of my dormi-

tory and made for the jungles. I continued to travel for about a week in the forests before meeting with a living soul. During this time I subsisted on wild honey which I found very plentiful, edible roots, fruit, and the larvæ of a species of insects peculiar to these islands considered a great delicacy by the aborigines. I did not want for food. In fact I found myself getting stronger and better able to withstand fatigue every day. At the end of my seventh day's experience of jungle life I came upon an open plain with the sea in front of me. Here I fell in with a tribe of aborigines. They appeared at first frightened at my approach and showed a disposition to flee to the jungles. I offered their chief my little store of honey and insect larvæ which was gladly accepted. This peace-offering had the effect of gaining the confidence of the whole tribe, and they began to collect round me, men, women and children, and manifested a great curiosity in my appearance, especially my height. I was six feet, while the tallest of the tribe did not exceed four feet.

When I surprised the little camp, the women were engaged cooking. On one fire was the shell of a huge turtle acting as its own pot, in which was simmering the green fat so delicious to the European palate; on another its flesh was being boiled together with some splendid fish; on a third a wild pig was being roasted, its drippings falling on wild yams; on a fourth a large sea-snake, considered a great delicacy, was stewing in its own juice. The sight and smell of cooked food made my mouth water and I felt an irresistible craving to taste the delicacies. I tried to make myself understood by signs, and was fairly successful. A consultation was then held amongst the men of the tribe as to whether it would be safe or dangerous to extend their hospitality towards me. The



elders, who are held in great respect by the younger members of the tribe, decided that the question should be submitted to the spirit of the deep for decision. The following ceremony was then performed to test whether my appearance amongst the tribe was for good or evil. A large circle was described on the ground and I was made to stand at a certain point of the circumference. A live sea-snake was then brought into the centre of the circle and pinned to the ground by a skewer passing through its body, after which the head was cut off with a piece of flint, for they have no knives or implements of metal. The moment the reptile was decapitated the body began to twist and turn round the skewer until life was extinct. All the tribe watched the movement with breathless interest. The snake at last expired with its bloody trunk away from the spot where I was standing, and a shout of joy went up from every mouth. The great spirit of the deep had indicated that my advent was for good, and I was permitted to sojourn with the tribe as long as I liked. Had the snake died with the bloody trunk in my direction it would have been considered a warning from the great spirit of the deep that my presence amongst them was for evil, and I would have been either driven out of their camp or secretly murdered.

I spent nearly six months with the tribe and was very kindly treated by them all, especially by their chief. I had taught them many new ways of catching fish, which is their chief food, and assisted them to build several canoes such as are used on Indian rivers. I always found them kind, trustful, unselfish, honest, generous and light-hearted. They had no thought for the morrow. Nor was it necessary. The sea and forest supplied them with abundance of food. They had never known want or even



scarcity. The scenery too is lovely beyond description. It is like fairy-land. The island is covered with luxuriant vegetation down to the water's edge. Magnificent forest trees with umbrella-like tops shoot up to a height of two hundred feet, their stems covered from root to branch with lovely creepers in beautiful festoons; with palms, rattans, and canes of many varieties interspersed, creating striking contrasts of form and colouring. The sea too is calm and clear as crystal with beautiful coral gardens beneath the surface. Indeed, the most gorgeous combination of vegetable and animal life afford but a very poor sub-aërial representation of those submarine gardens.

The number of aborigines living on the island, as far as I could learn, numbered about one thousand, divided into tribes of about thirty or forty each. Each tribe fixes upon a spot for a depôt, here the sick are tended, and any extra supplies they may have are hoarded. One tribe does not interfere with the territory or preserves of another. On two tribes meeting the great sign of friendship is the presence of women, for when hostility is intended, the weaker sex are sent to a place of safety.

Their huts, if they deserve the name, are merely palm tree leaves, most loosely put together; they also shelter themselves under large trees, and overhanging rocks. The bones of animals or fish, which they have eaten, as well as the shells of turtles, are all thrown into one heap close to the camp, the smell from this becomes in time very offensive. When they can no longer endure it, they remove to a fresh camp.

Flint is used instead of iron or steel. They make their arrow-heads of flint; and use it to shave and tattoo their bodies. Their language is very deficient in words, and

different tribes have distinct dialects. As for numerals they never yet discovered the necessity ; so when they talk of having taken quantities or numbers of anything, it is impossible to have any idea of their meaning, and what still more increases the difficulty is, that in framing an answer they do so from the question, almost repeating the same words. For example, if you ask them if such and such an occurrence took place, instead of saying "Yes" if the reply is in the affirmative, they will repeat the words of the questioner.

The day is divided into three portions—sunrise, midday, sunset—recognising no sub-divisions of time. In like manner, the year, with them has three seasons: first the dry period called *ea-ra-bodilin* extending from February to May; secondly, the rainy season, *ga-ma-lin*, from June to September; and thirdly, the moderate season, called *pa-pa-lin*, lasting from October till January.

The Andamanese have some strange customs, crying with them signifies joy or reconciliation with enemies, when two tribes meet, in friendly intercourse, new comers burst out into a long low wail which, by degrees, is raised to the highest pitch of the human voice. Then the other tribe join in and crying is kept up with great spirit for nearly an hour. This crying put me in mind of the noise made by a party of Indian women starting on a pilgrimage. After crying is finished dancing commences. The women clap their hands and sing to the music produced by the stamping of the men's feet on the ground. Their songs consist in the recital of events that have taken place since their last meeting. Paint is used by the Andamanese in place of clothing and its mode of application indicates for what purpose it is put on; whether for simple ornament, to drive away disease, evil spirits, or as

a sign of mourning. Sometimes, however, a few fibres are fantastically worn round the forehead, neck, waist, or below the knee in the form of a garter, but all other clothing they consider useless and unnecessary.

Most of the women, however, make some slight show of decency. They twist up fibres into the form of thin ropes, which they cover with leaves and wear round their waists. From this waist band a number of streamers depend which reach half way to the knee. For ornaments they wear a string of their ancestors' bones round the neck. A widow wears the skull of her dead husband slung in a basket over her back. But in the event of her having a child to carry, the skull is fastened to the waist belt.

All the adults have their bodies tattooed, the operation is commenced at a very early age, and until it is completed they are not considered eligible for marriage. As soon as they begin to swim, which is about the age of eight, tattooing commences. Only a very small portion of the body is operated upon at a time. The instrument used is a piece of sharpened flint bound to a stick; a considerable amount of blood is lost during each operation. Hence the necessity of long intervals between the operations. It requires eight years, in some cases, to tattoo the entire body. They do not form figures like the Burmese.

The men marry as soon as they as they are able to provide for a wife. The youthful swain eats a peculiar kind of fish, called *goom-dah* while his parents perform certain religious observances. This entitles the youth to the appellation of *goo-moo* signifying "eligible for marriage." Girls on attaining a marriageable age wear certain flowers, by which they are distinguished. Before marrying, young men take an oath to refrain from eating pork for



one year commencing from April, they are not, however, permitted to refrain from hunting swine, as these animals are necessary for the support of the tribe. They are allowed to eat fish, turtle and fruit during the probationary year.

The marriage ceremony is very simple. A man of 18 or 19 is engaged to a girl of 13 or 14 belonging to a different family. The chief of the tribe unites the man and wife, if the union has his approval. On the day fixed for the marriage ceremony the youthful pair are seated apart from the remainder of the tribe, and pass the day in staring at each other. On the approach of night the chief advances, and taking the hands of the pair join them together; they then retire into the jungle where they pass their honeymoon. On the return of the bride and bridegroom to their tribe, *jeedgo*, crying and dancing, are kept up with great spirit for several days.

The wife has to perform all the home duties, such as providing shelter, making mats to sleep upon, cooking the food, procuring water and shell-fish, carrying loads when changing from camp to camp, shaving and painting her husband as well as attending upon him in sickness. The husband's duty is to protect the wife, make canoes for fishing, implements for hunting pigs, catching turtle, and spearing fish.

When children are born, the infant is first bathed in cold water, and then warmed over a fire, on the supposition that beginning early to accustom them to changes of temperature, they will grow up hardy. Men and women seem equally fond of children and delight in carrying them about. All pet them, and when they cry for anything they get it. The result is that the little one is often killed through over kindness. Children are named



some months before they are born, after some family or favourite cognomen, consequently there is no distinction between the males and females. As their vocabulary of names is limited to about twenty-five, they have to add some prefix to each, as a mark of distinction.

When an adult dies he is rapidly buried and the tribe migrate for about a month to another locality, at least eight or ten miles off through fear of the ghost of the departed. A corpse is viewed with extreme horror, and no one will approach a burial-ground, except the nearest of kin to the deceased.

I was present at only one burial during my whole sojourn amongst the Andamanese. The deceased had two married sisters whose husbands' duty it was to bury the corpse. Death took place at 6 A.M., and within two hours after, his remains were rolled up in leaves by the oldest people of the tribe, and corded with strong fibre preparatory to being consigned to the grave. The grave was not more than two feet deep. Here the corpse was placed in a sitting position with his face towards the rising sun. Before filling in the grave the whole tribe took a last farewell of their departed friend, and each gently blew upon his face and forehead. Before retiring, a cup of water was placed at the head of the grave in case the spirit of the deceased should feel thirsty during the night.

When a headman or chief dies, the burial is somewhat different to that described above. A stage is erected some twenty feet from the ground, and on this the corpse is placed. The powerful spirit of the great man is supposed to be satisfied with this distinction, and in consequence will not return to injure any of the tribe. A fire is lighted below the stage to scare away any evil spirits that may be lurking about. The extraction of the

skull and bones of dead relatives, requires both skill and courage, while by keeping them carefully, and wearing them during pain and sickness, it is supposed the ghost of the departed will be influenced for good towards the wearer.

Should a stranger or man of a different tribe die amongst them his funeral rites are entirely neglected. The corpse is either thrown into the jungle or the sea. The evil influences of a stranger's spirit are not dreaded.

When a neighbour comes to condole with a man or woman who has lost a wife or husband, the custom is to fall into each other's arms and cry as long as the embrace lasts. They then sit down and recite the virtues of the departed in song.

The Andamanese eat nothing raw, not even fruit. In cooking meat they either throw it on the embers, turning it over when the underside appears to be sufficiently done, or stew it in tortoise shells. They are little people with very large appetites, and can easily consume six or seven pounds of fish or pork at one sitting. A large *pinna* forms their plate and a *nautilus* shell their drinking cup. They have no regular periods for their meals, but eat when they are hungry, no matter at what time or place. They make it a point, however, to partake of a good meal before setting out on a hunting or fishing expedition.

Their principle food at the commencement and during the north-sun period, is honey, fruit and turtles. In the rainy season they do not wander about very much, owing to the difficulty of obtaining shelter. At this period the jack fruit comes into season and the seed lasts them about three months. In the early part of the middle season pigs are common. When these become scarce, the people take to fishing and turtle catching. In January honey is

plentiful, and the Andamanese bring down the honeycomb with great dexterity, neither injuring the bees, nor getting stung by them. They use a wild shrub which grows in the jungle called *jenedah*, the juice of which has an intoxicating effect. The person who ascends the tree takes a bunch of this shrub, previously pounded, so as to break the bark, in his hand. When he reaches the bees he lashes about him and scatters the juice in all directions. The bees fall to the ground in a state of intoxication and give no further trouble, while the honeycomb is cut down. They also make use of the wax to stop leaks in their canoes, for covering the fibres which they use to fasten the flint heads to the arrow shafts, and to preserve their bow strings.

Their bows and arrows are mostly used for shooting fish in shallow water; the upper two-thirds of the arrow is a light reed, the lower portion a heavier material armed, at the point, with a piece of sharp flint. As soon as a shoal of fish, or even one or two large fish appear, all are at once on the alert, they dash about over the sharp coral beds without caring for it. Their eyesight is most acute. They fire their arrows at objects in the water, which no person but themselves can perceive. They aim under the fish and mostly strike it through the bowels. When struck the victim darts away carrying off the arrow, which, however, soon becomes entangled in sea weed and is held fast until secured.

As soon as the children are able to toddle they are provided with small bows and arrows, unarmed, but pointed at the end and are made to practice on wounded fish, in very shallow water. The usual mode of killing captured fish is to bite through the vertebral column, just behind the head. Before, however, the fish is killed outright it



is thrown into the sea, and of course darts away, whereupon all the little boys and girls dart in after it; and invariably succeed in its recapture.

After spending some six months amongst these merry little people an Arab *dhow*, or small trading craft came to the island in search of coral. I made the acquaintance of the captain and he agreed to take me to the Persian Gulf, to which place his vessel was bound. From there, I made my way by land, to Central India, but being afraid to return to where I was known, I joined my present chief, and his brilliant little band of dacoits, where I have lived in peace and security ever since.

---

CHAPTER XVI.

---

## THE STORY OF NUNSALING THE NAGA.

THE story of the escaped convict concluded in the midst of uproarious applause, the chief directed the "Baboo" to take it down in writing. He said it would be a pity that so interesting an account of these merry little people, the Andamanese, who were being civilized off the face of the earth by the English, should be lost to posterity. This matter settled; the chief next called upon Munsaling to continue the entertainment by a recital of his adventures before becoming a dacoit. Accordingly, in obedience to his chief's command, Nunsaling began in this manner.

I am a Naga by birth and the son of a once powerful *Gamboorah*, or village chief. The tribe to which I belonged had settled for years on the frontier of Assam.

We were surrounded by many hostile tribes, and had often a stiff struggle to preserve our independence. Our greatest enemies were the Kookies, a small but hardy race of men capable of undergoing any amount of hardship and perfect fiends in battle. We were never a day at peace with the Kookies. There was always some blood feud to be settled, or some treachery to be avenged.

Matters were brought to a crisis when the Naga village of Simkur had turned out to a man to celebrate the *Gena Poojah*, a sacred religious festival from which all strangers are carefully excluded. The whole village was magnificently decorated, according to a Naga's idea of magnificence in decoration, with spears and bucklers, swords and daos, battle-axes and brass plates, banners and pendants, human skulls and buffalo horns, bows and arrows, plumes of peacock feathers and horse hair. There was the usual round, on such occasions, of feasting, drinking, smoking, dancing and singing; and at night, for the festival lasted three days, torch light processions accompanied with music.

In the midst of our festivities, when the warriors of my tribe had been worked up to a high state of religious frenzy a party of armed Kookies suddenly appeared. The noise of music, dancing and singing ceased in an instant. There was a death-like and ominous calm. Each man could hear his own heart beat. Then followed a sudden reaction, a war cry and a rush to arms. The Kookies stood their ground and contemplated the scene in silence and amazement! My father restrained the passions of his tribesmen in order to see what could be done by negotiation. The two chief men advanced to hold a parley.

"Oh! Great King of the Wild Hawks," began the Naga chief with outstretched arm, "who has guided your



warriors hither at a time when the presence of strangers among us is strictly prohibited? Have you come on purpose to provoke a quarrel while we are engaged in the performance of a religious ceremony?"

"No, Great Eagle," replied the Kookie chief, "we are not come hither to disturb your sacred rights. All we want is a passage through your village. My warriors are proceeding east on an elephant hunting expedition."

"The King of the Wild Hawks has not chosen a proper time to make such a request. It would be tantamount to desecration to allow a stranger to enter our village during the *Gena* festival, the most exclusive and sacred of all our ceremonies. You can renew the application at any other period and your request will be favourably considered."

"The Lord of the Golden Eagle cannot be ignorant of the fact that if we defer our expedition to a more convenient period, the elephants will have made themselves scarce, or worse still, Sanderson Sahib, the mighty white-faced hunter, who is exterminating the great leviathan of the forest, will steal a march upon us and hunt over our preserves."

"Ah brother!" responded the Naga chief in a sympathetic tone, "Sanderson Sahib is our common enemy. And I would gladly comply with your wish did not the solemnity of the *Gena Poojah* prohibit it. If we allowed you a free passage our village would be defiled, the great spirit, the all-powerful Being who rules our destiny offended, and our tribe disgraced and dishonoured. No; no; it cannot be."

The Kookies, frustrated in their attempt to pick a quarrel with the Nagas, sullenly retired.

Two days afterwards the Kookies returned, their numbers increased, and all armed to the teeth with spears,

battle-axes, knives, bows and shields. The village was stormed and the Nagas surprised. Nevertheless, the latter flew to arms like one man and fell upon the Kookies. The battle lasted several hours. The carnage was fearful! Neither side would yield an inch, as long as there was a man capable of raising a spear or drawing a bow. The fight continued until Nunsaling, the last man of my tribe left standing, fell mortally wounded. The Kookies on seeing him fall were about to sound the war whoop of triumph when our women, who had been looking on from a distance, sprang forward like a lightning flash, seized the spears of their dead and dying lords and fell upon the Kookies. Not a single warrior returned to tell the tale. Our women then brought out all the male children of our tribe and marking their heads with the blood of the slain made them swear by the great spirit to avenge the blood of their fathers on the rising generation of Kookies! Then raising their spears over the bodies of their fallen foe they cried out blood for blood and man for man we have exacted, but our sons are sworn to a double revenge. My mother being the wife of a Naga chief, it was her duty, in the absence of her dead lord, to ratify the vow made to the Great Spirit. Selecting the body of the Kookie chief she made a spear wound in the neck, from which, as the body was still warm, the blood flowed freely. Then stooping down she filled a horn drinking cup of the red liquid, and as she raised it to her lips pronounced, in the bitterness of her widowed heart, the following prophetic curse against the enemy of her tribe and people:—“As I drink this warm fluid from the heart of a fallen foe so shall the fruit of my womb drink the blood of every Kookie king for ten generations!” Then placing a spear in my hand—I was only a boy of ten or twelve years of

age at the time, but I remember everything as vividly as if it had only occurred yesterday—she made me hold it over the heart of the Kookie chief, and telling me to repeat after her these words :—“ Oh Great Spirit as I am now about to serve the King of the Wild Hawks so will I serve and teach my children to serve every Kookie that crosses my path and theirs ! ” As I pronounced the last words the spear was driven through the heart of the dead chief at my mother’s direction. “ There ” said she, “ shall the vile carcase remain, pinned to the earth by a Naga’s spear, till the foul vulture strip the flesh from the bones ! ”

This ceremony over, the women commenced to separate the bodies of the Nagas from those of the Kookies. It was a ghastly sight! And sometimes the work of considerable exertion and difficulty to part the one from the other. A dead Naga with his spear through the body of a Kookie, and the Kookie’s spear through the body of the Naga, and both weapons clutched with such intensity that there was no separating them. Time and patience, however, overcame the difficulty and the women continued their exertions till the bodies of their dead lords were all religiously disposed of according to the custom of our tribe.

This done, the women and children, with their goods and chattels, removed some ten miles to a fresh camping ground, for they feared the ghosts of the dead Kookies more than they did the living warriors !

Time went on and a new generation of Nagas and Kookies sprung up with the memory of the old blood feud as strong and bitter as ever. Times though had greatly changed since the great battle of *Sinkur* was fought. Thousands of acres of jungle across our border had been



cleared and converted into prosperous tea-gardens, giving employment to tens of thousands of wretched coolies from Bengal. Our preserves were being encroached upon. We had white-faced tea-planters on one side and Sanderson, the elephant hunter, on the other. Thus menaced it was necessary that the scattered tribes of the Assam frontier united for mutual protection. Negotiations to this end were in progress when we were threatened by a new and more serious calamity. Many of our people had taken to collecting rubber as a means of livelihood. Suddenly the British Government put a stop to our bleeding the trees and reserved the forests, which we regarded as our own special preserves, the happy hunting ground of our forefathers. The Nagas retaliated. They seized the forest officers, and carried them off to their stronghold in the jungle. One man, a Bengali, died of sheer fright. We stuck to the remainder in hopes of the British Government offering us favourable terms for their release. The Governor-General replied by sending an expedition against our people. We thought at first that this was only an idle threat or feint show of force, for the purpose of intimidating us into restoring the captives to liberty. We never believed for a moment that British troops could pierce our impenetrable jungles. We laughed at what we considered an idle threat on the part of the Viceroy of India and held on to our prisoners. We wanted a guarantee that would leave us in undisputed possession of our forests and all they contained, both in animal and vegetable production. If these terms were conceded we offered to deliver up the captives. The English would not listen to the condition proposed, but continued to push on the expedition organized to punish my people, and release the captives by force. The Nagas on their part,—

though anticipating failure of the expedition to penetrate the dense jungles surrounding Assam Proper, set to work, not only to strengthen their positions, but to lay in a plentiful supply of poisoned arrows, against the day of trouble, should it ever arrive. To our surprise and dismay it did arrive. One day a hunting party of Nagas suddenly encountered the advance guard of the threatened expedition, about fifteen miles from our nearest village. The Nagas, being few in number, took to flight. The enemy opened fire and two men fell. The news was received by the Nagas with the greatest consternation and dismay. Every warrior flew to arms. A consultation was held, and after hearing the testimony of the hunting party who brought in the news, it was decided to take up a strong position and act on the defensive. Some were for going out and meeting the enemy in the jungle, but on learning that the English troops were armed with weapons that killed at a distance of half a *kos* (one mile) the proposal was abandoned.

A third party suggested surprising the English camp at dead of night and stealing the weapons that proved so destructive at long ranges. This proposal was agreed to without a dissentient voice.

About an hour after sundown a party of Nagas, picked men, started for the English camp. The advance guard, which was separated from the main body by half a *kos*, had bivouacked for the night under some large trees. Camp fires were burning in all directions to keep off wild animals. The light enabled us to see from a distance, without being seen by the sentries, the forms of the sepoys asleep on the grass with their arms piled in usual military style. The jungle in the vicinity was very dense. We crept stealthily through the underwood until the cor-

don of outposts was passed, and reached the slumbering camp unobserved. The seizure of the arms was the work of a moment, and we disappeared, as we had come, through the underwood without alarming the sentries or camp.

Great was the applause of the Nagas on learning the next morning the success of the enterprise. But equally great was the disappointment later on when it was discovered that the arms we had taken such pains, and risked so much, to obtain were of no earthly use to us. No one knew how to use them! The only gun known to any of the tribe was a rude matchlock, even the use of this weapon was imperfectly understood. Of a breech loading rifle we had never even heard before. All our art and ingenuity were exhausted in trying to load one. We half filled the barrel with gunpowder, cut down a leaden bullet until it was small enough to enter the muzzle, and tried to discharge it with a lighted torch. It was no use; we couldn't explode the gunpowder. Then we tried to draw the charge, but failed. A venerable sage, whose advice and counsel was respected by the whole tribe, suggested placing the gun across the fire till the barrel became red hot. This was done with the result that the rifle exploded and the contents of the barrel lodged in the body of one of our best warriors. The whole tribe was seized with panic and bolted from the spot. No one could be persuaded to touch one of the stolen weapons again. They fell into the hands of the English, when, a few days afterwards, our villages were stormed and taken. It is to the exploding of the rifle and its fatal result I attribute the easy victory of the British expedition against the Nagas. The latter could not be induced to face an enemy armed with an infernal machine, the nature of which they did not under-



stand. I had been made a prisoner of war during the first brush with the enemy, and was kept under strict surveillance for over a month. One night the sepoy guard that had charge of the prisoners was encamped on a piece of rising ground covered with a short bushy shrub, the roots of which, when pounded and soaked in water, formed a strong and powerful intoxicant, extremely pleasant to the palate. I taught the sepoy how to prepare it. Before morning there was not a man jack sober enough to turn out for sentry go! You can easily guess what followed. I succeeded in making good my escape. But fearful lest the English, after subduing the Nagas, would annex the country, and recapture me. I fled from the home of my fathers and became a dacoit in an independent Native State. Here I have lived in peace and security and served my chief with fidelity ever since.

Hear! hear! from the audience.

[*N. B.*—There is not much “Knavery to Unmask” in the story of these simple children of nature, but a work professing to illustrate the manners, customs, peculiarities, and superstitions of the various races of India would not be complete were the Nagas left out.]



## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE STORY OF THE VILLAGE CHOWKEYDAR.

NUNSALING, the Naga, having finished his story, for which he received a hearty round of applause, the chief next called upon Gunput Tewary to favour the company with his experience before becoming dacoit. Accordingly, in obedience to his chief's command, Gunput Tewary began in this manner:—

I am the son of a *Chowkeydar* and the grandson of a *Chowkeydar*. In fact, all my ancestors in the male line for generations back had served in the rural police; and your humble servant had the honour of first seeing the light of heaven in the thanna compound. My father was nicknamed the "black-mailer" and I was called after him the young "black-mailer." When I grew up to

man's estate my father, who had some influence with the *daroga*, got me enrolled as a village watchman. I will never forget the proud sensation I felt when strutting about in my new uniform for the first time! I imagined all the town were looking at me. Casting about for some object on which to show my authority, I spied a *pan* seller, whose stall projected about an eighth of an inch on the public road, and I threatened to arrest him for causing an obstruction. "Oh great maharaj!" exclaimed the *pan* vendor joining his hands in a supplicating attitude "forgive me this time and I'll have the stall removed in an instant." "No," returned I, "you must go to the *thanna*; the principal thoroughfare of the town cannot be obstructed in this manner." The *pan* vendor continued pleading, but I was not to be put off by empty talk. He saw this, and resorted to other tactics. The accused then made up a small packet of choice *khilies*, in the wrapper of which, a silver piece was concealed. The packet of *khilies* was placed on the corner of the stall in my direction, and the vendor with a significant look, as he pointed to the peace-offering, asked permission to go into his shop to procure a *chudder* to cover his body before accompanying me to the police station. The permission asked for was given, and during the absence of the vendor I picked up the packet of *pan*. On his return I told him, that, as it was his first offence, I would excuse him, but, at the same time, warned him to be more careful in future. The victim joined his hands again and bowing low promised compliance. I then walked away with an assumption of importance that would put the newly elected Vice-Chairman of our newly created Municipality to the blush. This was my first essay in the art of blackmailing.

Shortly after the event recorded above I was posted to



a village in Lower Bengal on the magnificent salary of four rupee a month. Even this sum, small as it was, was not paid me regularly. The village headman, who was virtually my lord and master, explained to me, when I complained about my pay, how my predecessor used to forage for himself, as he expressed it, without troubling the rate-payers. "Look here, my fine fellow," said he to me one morning after I had submitted my report, "there is a *hat* (market) held in the village of which you have charge twice a week. It is entirely your own fault if you do not squeeze your salary out of the stall-keepers. Your predecessor was able in ten years to retire a rich man, though he never drew a rupee in the way of salary during the whole period of his service. Now, my advice to you is to go and do likewise." I thanked the zemindar for his advice, left his presence and waited patiently for *hat* day. *Hat* day in due course arrived, and I set out to levy my "dues" from the vendors. To my surprise, I soon discovered, I was not the only person who exacted "dues" from the vendors. The zemindar's man was there going round from stall to stall collecting *tola* (rent) for the ground on which the vendor squatted. Next came half a dozen boys collecting *tola* for the Brahmin *gurrumahasaya* (the village schoolmaster). Then followed a Brahmin priest exacting tax for the *barwaripooja*—a religious ceremony held once a year in honour of the village idols—towards the expense of which every good Hindoo is bound to subscribe on pain of losing his cattle by disease, or a member of his family through sickness, or the failure of his crops through drought. With all these interlopers and a host of others in the way, I quite despaired of ever becoming rich from the *tola* collected at the village *hat*.

Fortunately, I was not long at my new post when a circumstance occurred which made me independent of the *hat* collections. A well-to-do family in the village had a playful, winning, bright-eyed little girl of six which the mother in the pride of her heart had covered with jewellery. The little girl was dearly beloved by all the village. Her parents worshipped her. One morning she had gone out to play with other girls of her own age, but never returned. The parents, when the child was missed, became frantic with grief. All the village (for the news of the missing child spread like wild fire) hastened to offer condolence to the bereaved parents, and assist in the search for the little darling. Parties of men distributed themselves in various directions ; every house, every street, every mangoe tope, every bamboo clump, every plantain garden, every tamarind grove, and every nullah and piece of jungle in the neighbourhood were searched, but in vain. Fishermen turned out with thier nets to drag the tanks, which were both large and numerous round the outskirts of the village. At last the body of the missing child was discovered ; but without its ornaments, in a disused tank overgrown with rank weeds and aquatic plants. When brought to shore marks of strangulation were visible on the neck. The absence of the child's ornaments left no doubt as to the motive of the murder.

The question now was—not, indeed, who murdered the child—but what should be done with the body. In this dilemma the zemindar was appealed to for light and leading, and like a good Hindoo decided upon immediate cremation. This decision had the approbation of the whole village. But as it was contrary to law to dispose of the body of the victim in a murder case without reporting the matter to the police, it was necessary to guard

against unpleasant consequences. I was accordingly sent for by the zemindar and let into the secret. "Look here," said the great man addressing me for the first time in his life in a soft and respectful tone, "it would be a great calamity, and a grave outrage against the whole Hindoo community to deprive the afflicted parents of the murdered child of the only comfort now left to them—that of seeing the body of their little darling cremated. What is the use of reporting the case to the authorities, for even if the murderer were arrested and hanged that would not bring the child back to life again. If an enquiry is held, the body of the child will be polluted. This would not only be a great sin against our religion, but the very remembrance of the outrage would darken the whole future of the father and mother of the deceased. This cannot be allowed. I, of course, acquiesced in all that the zemindar had said and promised to be "*chup*," and not only that, I praised his piety and goodness of heart, so it was settled to hush up the matter, and I consented for a consideration, of course, to be out of the way during the ceremony of cremation. This was good news to the bereaved parents and extracted from the calamity its most deadly pang. That evening the rite of cremation was duly performed.

I now found myself in the happy position of Ali Baba when he stumbled upon the robbers' cave. I had only to say *Open Sesame*, when I wanted money, and behold the door of the zemindar's treasury flew open at the sound.

But my success made me indiscreet. I grew too exacting, and ultimately killed the goose that laid the golden eggs. The zemindar at last grew tired of my black-mailing and used his influence with my immediate superior to have me transferred to a distant village. He was success-



ful, and in order that I might not suspect the cause of the change I was transferred on promotion. I was further informed that my promotion, which carried with it increase of pay, was due to the excellent character the zemindar had given me! "Oh the scoundrel!" I said in my heart when I heard the news. But *chup's* the word for the present "I'll be even with the rascal yet!" I mentally exclaimed. And though I showed no outward sign of inward feeling I left the village vowing vengeance against the deceitful zemindar. ~

A few days after I had been installed in my new beat I sent an anonymous letter to the Magistrate of the district detailing the whole circumstances of the murder of the little village beauty for the sake of her ornaments, and the suppression of the crime at the instigation of the zemindar. A *daroga* a few days afterwards was deputed by the Magistrate to enquire into the truth or otherwise of my report. But, as I expected, nothing came of the enquiry. Nevertheless, I had my revenge all the same. I fastened on to the zemindar a parasite that would suck more blood from the parent trunk than the one he had succeeded in casting off. There is no vengeance so sweet to a black-mailer as that of being able to turn the tables on the man who refuses or objects to be victimised.

Having gained my object with regard to the perfidious zemindar, I now set to work to seek new victims. I had not long to wait. A well-to-do cultivator of the village to which I had been recently transferred had married a bouncing, blooming young damsel of sixteen, the daughter of a distant relation. The husband was not only old, but imbecile, and anything but a suitable partner for the village beauty, as Alanga, for that was the name of the young wife, was called. Like all village beauties, whether

in the East or in the West, Alanga was fond of admiration. Her visits to the public well, under pretence of fetching water, often really not required, became daily more frequent and prolonged. On one occasion it was quite dark when she returned home and her husband sternly demanded to know what had kept her out so long. The young wife explained that she had met her cousin, Gopenath, on the road, and he had detained her talking about family matters. Now this cousin was a gay young fellow, with not the best of reputations, and the old man forbade his wife talking to him again. "What is the harm in speaking to my cousin?" pouted the young beauty indignantly. So after a pause she plucked up courage and declared resolutely "I will speak to my cousin again whenever I meet him, I will! I will!! So there now!" The old man was annoyed and confounded at this sudden outburst of rebellion on the part of the hitherto obedient and dutiful wife, and he resolved to nip any further development of it in the bud by giving the lovely Alanga a good thrashing. This, of course, caused a great hullabaloo on the part of the young wife, but did not seem to mend matters in the least.

A day or two after this event the old man had to attend court over some land dispute and was absent a couple of days. When he returned Alanga was not to be found, and sad to relate, the gay young cousin had also disappeared, and, with the pair, most of the old man's family jewels. This was a terrible blow to the old man, and he looked quite dejected and crest-fallen. It is, however, but fair to say he was more cut up over the loss of his wife than that of the family jewels, though their value was considerable.

In this dilemma the disconsolate husband sought my

advice and assistance. I told him I thought I knew where the fugitives were to be found. He brightened up at the news and offered me twenty rupees if I would take him to the spot. I asked him to make it thirty, and, after a good deal of haggling, he consented. This settled, we both started in pursuit. Towards evening we came in sight of a rest-house on the main road to the railway station. Here I told the old man to sit down under a tree and rest himself, and I would go on and make enquiries. He consented. I then went on to the rest-house, and looking through a window I saw Alanga, and her cousin, Gopenath, asleep on a mat on the floor. Returning to the husband I told him what I had seen. "But," said I, "you had better remain here quietly and I will go back and manage the whole affair for you much more satisfactorily than if you appeared upon the scene." The old man consenting I returned to the rest-house and woke up the fugitives. I threatened to take Gopenath into custody for enticing away a married woman with property. This threat put the gay Lothario in a terrible funk. He begged hard to be let off, pleading that he had only consented out of pure kindness to accompany Alanga to her mother's because her husband had ill-treated her. Alanga supported her cousin's statement.

"Well," said I addressing the man, "you have got yourself into a serious scrape. I have a warrant for your arrest but if you give me fifty rupees I will let you go." Gopenath said he had not fifty rupees with him but offered me thirty. This I refused. But after a good deal of haggling I agreed to accept forty, which was made up between the pair. Gopenath then made tracks by the back door and escaped.

Having cleared the way I now began to talk to Alanga,



and the more I saw of her the more she impressed me by her good looks. I assured her that she had now nothing to fear, that I would protect her from any further violence at the hands of her husband, and was entirely at her service. She thanked me most graciously for offering to befriend her in her hour of need, which she believed, on learning her husband was so close upon her track, was nigh at hand.

I now went back to the old man and said "Look here *mahashai*, your wife's cousin has run away through fright, but your wife is here and she is very angry. She says that she was only going to her mother's because you had beaten her, and she vows that she will not return to you again, and if you molest her she will lay a complaint before the Magistrate. This is, therefore, a much more serious business than I expected. I have fulfilled my promise and brought you to where your wife is, but it will be very difficult to persuade her to go back with you again. I therefore decline to interfere further in the case unless you give me another thirty rupees; The old man at first hesitated to do this, and said; "How do I know that my wife is in the rest-house as you represent." "Oh! I will soon satisfy you on that point" returned I. "But you must not go and speak to her in her present temper," so I took the old man to the window of the rest-house and showed him his wife. She was seated weeping in a corner of the room. The old man was now satisfied and gave me another thirty rupees. I then advised him to go back to his hiding place under the tree, and I would go into the rest-house and teach his wife a lesson she would not forget during the remainder of her life, unless she consents to return peaceably to her husband's hearth and home. "Very good" replied the old man, "but mind

you must not beat her too much, even if it is found necessary to resort to such strong measures." I accordingly promised not to be over severe in the chastisement of his wife. And so the old man hobbled off and lay down under the tree again and was soon fast asleep.

He did not awake till broad daylight the next morning. Starting to his feet he rubbed his eyes and began to look about him. Finding no one near he repaired to the rest-house, hoping to find that his wife had been brought to see the error of her ways and was willing to return home with him. Guess his surprise at finding we had both disappeared.

The old man worked himself up into a towering passion. He fumed and raged until he had collected the whole neighbourhood. The result was, acting on the advice of a friend, he went before the Magistrate and laid a complaint against me for enticing away his wife.

I was immediately sent for, but strongly denied ever having seen Alanga, except at a respectful distance in her own village.

The old man was *nonplussed*. He had no witnesses, and did not know what to do. Some hours afterwards he received a message from Alanga herself offering to return home with him if he consented to withdraw the charge against me. The poor old man was most reluctant to do this, but after a day's delay, and finding Alanga would not come to terms on any other condition, he yielded. It was now my turn to be indignant. I went before the Magistrate and demanded an enquiry, swore that my reputation as an honest man had been ruined, and made a terrible bluster. The result was the old man had to pay me another thirty rupees as compensation for a false charge. When everything had been settled and the

money paid, Alanga went back to her husband, but to his great sorrow he discovered that more than half the family jewels had disappeared. These also had found their way into my possession. Besides, I had the pleasure of a good four days' flirtation with the frail but fair Alanga.

The poor old man returned home a sadder but wiser man, he was even too much down-hearted to use strong measures against his wife, and she vowed that if ever he touched her again she would leave him at once and forever.

Reckoning up the proceeds of my honest industry after the elopement episode I found myself in possession of sufficient funds to defray my marriage expenses. I consequently applied for six months' leave for the purpose. But before arrangements could be made for my relief another circumstance occurred in the village which promised to increase considerably my little store of savings.

The son of a respectable and well-to-do cultivator was involved in an intrigue with a buxom young widow, the daughter of an orthodox Hindoo family. The father of the girl suspected what was going on, but did not like to move in the matter for fear of scandal. I was privately consulted, and suggested, as the best solution of the problem, to get up a false case against the young widow's paramour and remove him from the neighbourhood. "But how is it to be done?" queried the girl's father. "Look here," said I, "nothing is easier. When you see him prowling about the house to-night, you call out *chor! chor!* (thief! thief) at the top of your voice. He will immediately make tracks. I will be close at hand and give chase. When arrested he'll be found in possession of a brass *lotah* which I expect you to be able to swear to before the Magistrate, as your property, and you get rid,



to a dead certainty, of the violator of your family honour and the disturber of your domestic tranquillity for six months. Once convicted of theft he will give you no more trouble, for the police can run him in on any pretence ever after."

My proposal was highly approved of and the girl's father acknowledged that I was a "deuced clever fellow." That night the gay Lothario was locked up, with a clear case of theft recorded against him. While the disappointed lover was in my power I tried to squeeze something out of him, for, although I had been well paid by the girl's father, I always made it a rule to black-mail both parties. My prisoner on this occasion, however, turned sulky and refused to be squeezed. He would not, he said, yield an inch; but on the other hand threatened to revenge the outrage as soon as he got his liberty. "Will you!" said I, "just wait a minute and I'll show you how we treat such saucy customers as you!" So saying I jumped up, procured a piece of hemp rope, the two ends of which I made fast to his two great toes. The rope was then passed round his neck and made fast. His arms had been previously tied behind his back. I next got a piece of bamboo stick which I inserted between the openings, and twisting it round tightened up the lashing as you would tighten up a drum of jute. "Now" said I "my good fellow, you remain in that position till you and I come to terms." The victim groaned but could make no noise, for he was well gagged.

Tired out, I lay down and dropped off to sleep. When I awoke the next morning I found my prisoner a corpse! I was horrified! I saw in an instant there was nothing left for me, but to seek safety in flight. I hastily collected what little money and valuables I had and bolted for

my life. I wandered about from place to place till I fell in with our noble captain and his brave little band of dacoits. Here I have lived in peace and security ever since.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE GHATAK'S STORY.

WHEN the plaudits which followed the conclusion of the chowkeydar's narrative had subsided, the chief jumped to his feet and proposed a vote of thanks to the narrator for his very entertaining and instructive story. "The chowkeydar's history," the chief went on to say, "should be published in every written and spoken language of the East for the edification and instruction of our friends the English, across the border. To this end I direct the kerani of this honourable company of free-booters, our worthy brother the Baboo, do record the chowkeydar's excellent narrative as we have just heard it from the lips of the narrator. I must confess I never listened to a more entertaining story. Its power of attracting and



detaining attention is magical! It keeps the mind in pleasing captivity from start to finish. My only regret is that it has come so suddenly to an end. The remarkable ingenuity, the original humour, the peculiarity of expression, the incidents, the circumstances, the surprises, the jests of action, and the flashes of human nature so exquisitely intermingled impart to the story an interest, a fascination which places it on a level with anything in the Arabian Nights."

The chief resuming his seat amidst deafening cheers called upon the *Ghatak* for the next story. The *Ghatak* (the match-maker amongst the Hindoos) accordingly began in this fashion.

Like my friend the chowkeydar I will begin by saying I am the son of a *Ghatak* and the grandson of a *Ghatak*. But here all resemblances ends, as far as our profession is concerned, between us. The chowkeydar is hated but feared, while I am loved and welcomed by every household where there is a young man or maiden to marry. For what occupation can afford more pleasure than that of bringing together and uniting in holy matrimony the youth and beauty of favoured Bengal. There is not a note of Apollo's lute sounds half so sweet to the ears of parents with marriageable sons and daughters as the name of the *Ghatak*, the Indian Cupid, the servant of *Kamadeva* as I am called. What a slow people the Christians must be to have no professional match-makers amongst them! I am told the young people do their own *ghatkáli* (courting) and very often in opposition to their parents. But we do things better in India, our sages were wiser men than the English. Byron says "what men call gallantry and gods adultery, is much more common where the climate's sultry." Byron evidently never

visited India; globe-trotting was not in vogue in his time. Though we live in a vapour bath one half of the year and an atmosphere like the blast of a furnace the other half, we have never had occasion to establish a divorce court like some of the nations of the "moral north." This all comes of allowing young people to marry without the aid of a *Ghatak*. (Here a voice from one of the audience interrupted the speaker). "That's all very well *Ghatak Mohasaya*, but what will become of Othello's occupation when Hindu women are educated, zenanas and infant-marriage abolished, and widow remarriage introduced? I guess young people will then want to copy their European sisters and do their own *ghatkali* and drive the professional match-maker out of the field!"

"Thank God," replied the *Ghatak* "I will not be alive when these misfortunes overtake my people. Besides the changes to which you refer are more remote than you imagine. Hindooism existed before Christianity was thought of, and match-making is as old as the hills. I can trace it back from my own noble ancestors until it is lost in the twilight of fable! Depend upon it an institution of such antiquity is not easily upset. I have no fear of being driven off the field by Hindoo reformers, though a countryman of mine, like our friend the astrologer, has actually made a voyage through space in a balloon! Ah my friends! prejudices received in youth are not easily eradicated, even in manhood, no matter what reformers may say. I have great confidence in that. Look at the great high priest of Brahmoism when he was actually denouncing child-marriage in the Samaj, he had a *Ghatak* employed courting a Rajah for his infant daughter! Surely this example is hopeful to the profession!"

Here the chief interposed and decided that the *Ghatak*

had the best of the argument. The match-maker then continued his story.

You see in Bengal every maiden must marry, whether she wish it or not. It is the custom of the country. Besides the ceremony must take place before the age of puberty, which, in a tropical climate like Bengal, is never later than the twelfth year. For a father to have an unmarried daughter in his house over that age is not only to become an outcaste and forfeit every social position, but even worse, it is regarded as a religious crime, involving not only reprobation and degradation in this world, but eternal punishment in the next. Oh great Brahmo! what the mighty Pontiffs of Rome have done for the ministers of the Catholic Church thou hast effected for the *Ghatak*. The rights and ceremonies prescribed in both religions are so numerous and intricate that, to the common understanding, they are quite bewildering, and the church has set such extraordinary merit to the faithful observance of these religious rights and ceremonies that they are declared sufficient to pave the way to heaven itself. The key to all this mystery, the Pope in the case of Catholics has placed in the hands of the priests as Brahmo has entrusted to the "twice born" the secrets of Hindooism.

With these few prefatory remarks I will now proceed with my story.

The first duty of a *Ghatak* is to make himself acquainted with all the Hindoo families of his own caste in the district in which he intends to carry on his profession. As he goes about from village to village, he learns the names, occupation and means of parents with marriageable sons and daughters. My practice was always to unite families living at a distance. This had many advantages. It



enabled me to make all my maidens as gentle and beautiful as Lakshmi, and all my swains as handsome and accomplished as Kartikiya; though the one might be as ugly as sin, and the other as deformed as deformity itself. When I approached a village in my professional capacity, all the children would run to tell their mothers that the *Ghatak* had come! Would not there be a commotion then in every household to get a glimpse of the Indian Cupid! and casting aside their household duties the women would flee to every coign of vantage to see what house in the village I was going to enter. If the owner had a son or daughter to marry, my visit formed a subject of lively discussion for weeks afterwards, specially among the female portion of the neighbourhood. But the interest of outsiders is nothing compared to the pleasure my presence creates amongst the members of the family with whom my professional visit is concerned. Here I am always received with open arms and exclamations of joy. The *Ghatak* has come! the *Ghatak* has come! one is sent off to bring water to wash my feet, another to prepare the hooka, a third to bring a lotah of milk, a fourth is despatched to the village *jelliah* to bespeak an excellent fish, a fifth hurries off to the confectioner for some choice sweets, and a sixth is told to run and call the head of the house, and to say the *Ghatak* has come!

On the arrival of the head of the house, warm greetings follow, and then we settle down to business. If my host has a daughter to marry, I have a husband in view for her, handsome, accomplished, and of good parentage. If, on the other hand, a son is to be provided with a life partner, I am equally fortunate in having at my command a second Lakshmi, a fair sweet creature, that to gaze upon would steal away the senses! and to crown all of high

caste. Of course it is my business not only to please, but deceive both parties to the contract. And the greater the deception the greater the remuneration, for I make both sides pay equally for my services. This is how I manage it. I say to the father of the intended bride, "Look here, the other side have given me so much for this negotiation. You cannot do less, and maintain your social position, than follow their example. When I interview the bridegroom's party I advance the same argument. I never found it to fail. There is no ceremony, religious or otherwise, that opens the heart, and, I may also add, the purse strings of a Hindoo like that of marriage. It seems to me an extremely short-sighted policy on the part of the Indian Government not to tax them. No one would attempt to evade the payment of such a tax as they do the income-tax. Besides it would be extremely popular with the people. If ever I have an opportunity of speaking to the Viceroy or his Financial Minister I will give them the benefit of my experience on the subject.

But to resume my story. I must admit that occasionally I have some very hard bargains to deal with. A father has got a deformed daughter and he wants her off his hands. I have to use all my persuasive eloquence to get her mated. In critical cases of this kind I generally select an equally deformed bridegroom and persuade the parents of the children that the one is as beautiful as Lakshmi, and the other is a second Kartikiya. All parties are delighted, and both sides pay handsomely. These negotiations are the most profitable.

I now come to the turning point of my career as a *Ghatak*. A well-to-do zemindar, considerably advanced in life, had taken it into his head to marry a third wife. His two first wives were still living, ~~but had no children.~~

I was engaged to negotiate in the matter. The old man did not want a child-wife, but a woman who could make herself generally useful and assist with the cooking and other household duties. I searched high and low, but for the life of me could not hit upon the exact thing wanted. It had got noised abroad that the old man was eccentric and only wanted to make a collection of wives and shut them up in a kind of *harem* for life. No one could therefore be persuaded to become Mrs. Chandra number three on any consideration. I was forced to confess myself fairly beaten, for the first time in my life. Poor old Chandra appeared quite crestfallen when he heard the story of my failure. He could not understand any woman refusing to marry him, or any father not jumping at the chance of getting a daughter provided for. I was told to try again with a promise of having my fee doubled if I succeeded. I consented to make another trial, though I was not very sanguine of success.

Some days after my interview with the zemindar a strolling actor happened to pass through my village. He had amongst his company a young man of about eighteen years of age who used to dance and sing in the disguise of a woman. As the boy had been brought up to this profession from a very early age his hair was long, he wore earrings, nose-ring and in fact, everything necessary to complete the disguise. It struck me at once that this boy would suit the zemindar's purpose to a tee, so taking the lad's master aside I confided to him the project I had in view. He offered to place the boy at my disposal on condition of sharing the reward. To this I readily consented. I explained both to the master and man that the latter would not be called upon to perform any of the ~~duties~~ of a wife beyond assisting the women of the zenana



in cooking and such like household matters. "Besides" said I, "you can clear out at any time should you find the life of a zenana irksome. And it is your own fault if you leave the zemindar empty-handed."

The boy under these conditions agreed to go through the ceremony of marriage and become Mrs. Chandra number three.

This little matter settled I hastened to the zemindar to acquaint him of my success.

He was delighted. Before we parted a day was fixed for bringing home the bride.

In order that there might be nothing wanting to give due solemnity to the occasion, the boy's hair was neatly braided, his feet painted with *alakta*, his body rubbed with turmeric and enveloped in a red silk *sade*.

Thus altered he was put into a palanquin and conveyed to the zemindar's residency. Chandra, however, in consequence of a severe attack of his old enemy, asthma, was unable to leave his bed to welcome his new bride and she was, therefore, relegated to the *Andarmahal*. I nevertheless received my fee in full all the same, and wishing the old man joy of his bargain, departed. Days and weeks went on, and contrary to my expectation that the boy would get tired of life in a zenana, and make his escape, he never turned up. He had, it appears, for his companions in the zenana the zemindar's second wife and her two widowed sisters, all young women under twenty-three, besides two daughters of the first wife still in their teens. With these pleasant companions the boy felt no inclination to change his quarters. Indeed, compared with the life of a strolling actor, or *natch girl* this is not to be wondered at. But what appeared the strangest part of the business was, that contrary to custom, the *chhota bahu* (the young-

est wife) excited no jealousy among her companions. Indeed, it was observed that since her arrival the little jealousy that formerly existed in the zenana had completely disappeared and all the young women vied with each other in doing little services for the *chhota bahu*! The old husband was in raptures over his happy family!

But at last the secret became too prominent for concealment! The old man's second wife, her two widowed sisters, and his two daughters were about to become mothers!

The scandal spread like wild fire through the neighbourhood. It reached the ears of the Magistrate and the police. The boy was arrested and committed to the sessions on a charge of false personation for the purpose of cheating.\* A warrant at the same time was issued for my arrest for aiding and abetting the offence. This put an end to my *Ghatkali*. I was obliged to flee from British territory and after much wandering about from *one native State* to another at last enrolled myself in the ranks of this honourable company of freebooters.

The zemindar's happy family, I learned from the columns of a native paper, so it must be true, had to undergo the usual penance prescribed by Hindoo custom for "love unlawful"—a *cold suttee*—which corresponds with a ceremony in favour amongst the Turks for a similar offence, namely, a bag and the Bosphorus!

\* Fact.

---

## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE STORY OF AN EX-C. S.

WHEN the story of the *Ghatak*, which was received with tremendous applause, was concluded, the chief next called upon Ram-Jaun-Chunder-Chuckerbutty to continue the entertainment by a recital of his experience before becoming a dacoit, for the edification of his brethren in crime. Here some one of the assembled outlaws remarked "If the forthcoming story is to be as long as the name of the narrator, we had better retire from labour to refreshment before settling down to listen to its recital." This witticism created another outburst of laughter, and as the merriment subsided Ram-Jaun-Chunder-Chuckerbutty, in obedience to his chief's command, began his story in this manner.



Lord Salisbury, if report be true, once said in the House of Lords, that he never could distinguish what possible connection there was between the diminution of crime and the spread of education. Crime, he thought, was "a consequence of moral depravity," and though you might change the nature of the crime by diverting the criminal's tastes and powers into new channels, you would not diminish the "moral depravity" in him by altering the direction of his desires, and putting new and more powerful tools into his hands. This celebrated speech of the noble Marquis, of course, had reference to England, when the educational mania was at its height, but his words would apply with even greater force to the state of India at the present day. Here we have hair-brained enthusiasts going mad over popular education. They are in such hot haste to make everybody scholars that the fundamental principles of education are entirely lost sight of. Government schools and colleges are cramming the people with secular instruction and purging them of all the little morality and respect for the gods they ever possessed. What is the consequence? I will answer the question in the relation of my own private history.

My name is Ram-Jaun-Chunder-Chuckerbutty, son of Ram Mohon Chunder Chuckerbutty of Eastern Bengal. My father was what is generally called an "upstart" among the native aristocracy. He had risen from comparative poverty to wealth and influence as a money-lender; thanks to the severe but just law of the foreigner, which not only allows a man to charge one hundred and fifty per cent. interest on capital, but compels the debtor to pay it. My father's greatest ambition was to see his son a C. S. To this end he spared neither trouble nor expense. I was sent to England to be educated, and as I

was the first Hindoo who had crossed the "black water" for the purpose, the eyes of all India were upon me. In England itself I was regarded as a natural curiosity, and was in consequence lionised by the people. At least that section of the British Public who delight in always having something new and rare wherewith to entertain their friends. At garden parties and other social gatherings I was the centre of attraction. Everyone wanted to know something of my history. The ladies in particular paid me most attention. This flattered my vanity, for I regarded the circumstance as an indication that the sweet little dears preferred me to their own countrymen. I was soon, however, disillusionised, for one day at a garden party at Lady Dashwood's, where I was the observed of all observers, I overheard a haughty young beauty ask her father if "it," alluding of course to me, could speak. The remark actually made me "blush," if an Indian were ever known to blush. My vanity was dashed, I was stung to the quick, and from that instant I conceived the bitter and deep-rooted hatred of the English that has grown and strengthened with my years. "Ah," said I to myself, "my haughty young beauty, the 'it' cannot only speak but 'its' burning eloquence will one day set the Ganges on fire and shake the British power in the East to its very foundation. True the day may be far distant. But the Bengalis are a patient race, and if there is anything in the world they understand better than another, it is the art of waiting." So I waited and went on with my studies, or as my school mates called it, cramming. I never lost sight of the purpose for which I had been sent to England, namely, to enter the Indian Civil Service by the door of competition. This as I have already said, was my father's ambition, and it accorded well with my

own inclinations, and though the desire to learn does not always include the faculty to acquire, I had an excellent memory, which enabled me to distance students of more powerful intellects. This is the great secret of success so remarkable in my countrymen at examinations. The memory does duty for intellect. So my progress was watched in England with much interest and in India with pride and enthusiasm. I knew this and the knowledge made me redouble my exertions. I never for a moment anticipated failure.

In due course I passed through the mill with flying colours and blossomed into a proud "Civilian." All India was jubilant. The Hindus celebrated the event by special *pujahs* and tendered offerings to their gods. I was welcomed back to Bengal with ostentatious rejoicing. I had expected on my return to India, like most young Civil Servants, to have been posted to some obscure subdivision of a district, but the Government out of respect to the feelings of the people appointed me a Magistrate in the first city in India. This gave occasion for still further rejoicing on the part of my countrymen. And I myself felt grateful to the British Government for the honour and indulgence so liberally bestowed upon me.

Although I was fully alive to the fact that my appointment was regarded in the light of an "experiment" and that my conduct and working would be strictly watched, I nevertheless entered upon my new duties and responsibilities with an honest determination to administer the law with strict impartiality and to serve the British Government with fidelity. I had by this time almost forgotten and fully forgiven the wound inflicted on my vanity by the remark of the fair Saxon while prosecuting



my studies in England. I often thought to myself "What would she say now if she saw me in all the power and dignity of office, dealing out justice to black and white alike? I suppose she would start with surprise and exclaim "Oh! father look! *it* can really speak?"

I was getting on swimmingly in my new office. Everything was in my favour, the press and the public had been extremely indulgent to my shortcomings during my novitiate. I had got over the timidity and bashfulness due to inexperience; and was just beginning to feel my feet when black misfortune's withering blast nipped all my future prospects in the bud! A European gentleman had brought a charge of theft against a servant, the case was sent to me for trial. I considered the evidence insufficient to warrant a conviction and I consequently dismissed the suit. The plaintiff, who was dissatisfied with my decision, appealed. This was a fresh sting to my vanity. I knew my records would be called for, and probably my judgment reversed, or the case sent before the Chief Magistrate for retrial. If a conviction followed I might be reprimanded, possibly considered unfit for my post, The thought was intolerable. What was I to do under the circumstances? An Englishman would have taken the matter quietly and philosophically. At least he would not have committed a real crime to cover an error of judgment. But I was differently situated. I was on my trial. The eyes of all India were upon me. In this dilemma my *nature* rose superior to my English training. I flew to the only weapon of defence known to a Bengali—*deceit*! I tampered with the record of the case before producing it. I erased part of the plaintiff's evidence and so altered the remainder that it would appear the accused was acquitted on good and sufficient grounds.

But I had reckoned without my host. There was then a man at the head of the city police who was not to be taken in by my artfulness. My books were seized and I was suspended pending the orders of Government. A commission was appointed to enquire into my conduct. I was found guilty of tampering with judicial documents on the clearest evidence and recommended for dismissal from the service of the State. The Government concurring, gave immediate effect to the recommendation of the commission and I was sent forth into the world degraded and disgraced.

The news of my misfortune was received by my countrymen of Bengal with grief and dismay. My degradation was considered a national calamity, And so indeed it was. The first experiment of entrusting a native with high judicial powers had failed. But the cause of my failure itself was not regarded by my countrymen in the light of a crime for which I was personally responsible. My failings lay deep in the national character and only rose to the surface in the hour of trial. It is to this feeling I owe all the sympathy I have received from my countrymen ever since my fall. Other nationalities would have hated and despised the most popular member of their community if he had done half what I did to lower their national character in the eyes of the world. Not so the Bengalis. Though I am now a fugitive from justice and associated with a band of dacoits my name is the most popular name in India; and that not only with the common people, but amongst the educated classes. If, therefore, proof were wanting to show that education has little or no influence on national character, here we have it in abundance. But the English are a credulous people and nothing will shake their belief in the efficiency of

their educational institutions to change the nature of man. Nothing amused me so much, when I was in England, as the treatment of the criminal classes. When any wholly uneducated individual committed some deed of savage violence, it was immediately put down to his Cimmerian darkness and the convicting magistrate would prescribe for him a curriculum of "three R's." Accordingly, all convicted criminals of this description are handed over to the schoolmaster the moment they enter a prison for elementary education! The advocates of education assert that all kinds of reformation are to be effected by means of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The demon of burglary may be clean exorcised by a knowledge of long division and the rule of three! No man, they maintain, will ever be found guilty of robbery with violence who can "work obligations and write court hand," and from the day that a youth is able to read with ease and fluency he is safeguarded against all temptations to peculation! And all this, mind you, in the teeth of the strongest and most convincing proof to the contrary. What does their own favourite poet say on the subject? When Jack Cade heard that the Clerk of Chatham had been caught setting boys copies, he exclaimed, "Here's a villain!" That rough and ready moralist of Shakespeare's creation evidently regarded education itself as an actual phase of crime, and the attempt to impart it as sheer villainy. But times have changed since Shakespeare wrote the above. Not so, however, human nature. That is always the same.

I will relate one or two well authenticated instances of the inefficacy of education and the most careful religious moral training combined to influence national character.

The story of Edmund Sandilli, to begin with, is a



strong point, He was a show pupil like myself, received an excellent English education, was appointed a Deputy Magistrate at Cape Colony. He lunched with Sir Bartle Frere and other high officials and magnates of the colony when His Excellency visited the Eastern Provinces, attended the State ball, in white tie and "claw hammer," but two days afterwards he fled to the bush and in course of time was killed, wearing the martial costume of a blanket and a daub of clay! Then, again, there is the case of the missionary Dukwaria, a popular preacher, a champion of Sunday Schools, and a rich man to boot. He likewise took to the bush, the blanket and the daub of paint, ending his days like the young warrior Edmund Sandilli. To come nearer home, we have an instance of the wife of an English missionary at Simla adopting a native child, educating her, and bringing her up under the most careful Christian training. She was only two years of age when taken in hand, and could have known nothing about her people or parentage, yet at the age of twenty she fled to the hills and was afterwards discovered in a village wearing the costume of her tribe.

Mr. Reid, in one of his Indian publications, relates a remarkable, but amusing, instance of a half-civilized robber chief who had been induced to visit Calcutta during the stay of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales at Government House. The chief conducted himself with great dignity and decorum until one day he was suddenly confronted with an irresistible temptation, when his national characteristics flashed out in an instant. Here is the story in the author's own words: During the visit of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to Calcutta, amongst the numerous potentates who had come to pay their respects to England's future king, were some Afridi

chiefs. In order that the latter might carry back with them an account of the power and resources of the British Government in the East, Mr. Superintendent Reid, who was in special attendance upon His Royal Highness, was told to take the chiefs round the city and show them all that was worth seeing. Accordingly, the officer accompanied the strangers to Fort William, where they were taken over the arsenal; then the mint, the dockyard, the gun foundry, and every other place calculated to impress the guests with England's greatness, were inspected. Strange to say, during this round of visits, not one of these savage chiefs uttered a single expression of either surprise or admiration of anything they had seen; though such sights must necessarily have been quite new to them. This may be partly due to the fact that they did not fully comprehend the use or utility of what they had witnessed. On returning to Calcutta, the strangers expressed a wish to alight from their carriage and walk up Old Court House Street to see the preparations that were being made for the illuminations. The request was complied with; and the party proceeded on foot from the Scotch Kirk towards Government House. On arriving opposite the extensive show rooms of Messrs. Hamilton and Co., the jewellers, a venerable old chief of some seventy summers, stopped short, as if shot through the heart; and joining his hands together exclaimed in an ecstasy of delight, "Oh! Sir, what a place to loot!!" The incident was related to his Royal Highness at dinner, and it so tickled his fancy, that he could not refrain from laughing the whole of the evening.

The above examples will, I think, satisfy any reasonable being that it is not in the power of education or training, even under the most favourable circumstances, to wholly

obliterate the natural characteristics of a nation or people.

I will now return to my own personal narrative. It will not be surprising when you hear that the loss of my appointment in the Civil Service, embittered my hatred of the English. I resolved henceforth to become a thorn in the side of the Indian Government. To this end I started a vernacular paper and established a training school. In the former I abused the administration and all the European servants of Government. And in the latter I taught the rising generation to hate their foreign rulers. I was the moving spirit in all political movements. My countrymen delighted in calling me the Daniel O'Connell and the Parnell of India, just as they have been lately comparing Tantia Bheel to the Robin Hood of England! As yet I had only become popular among the educated class. But in order to extend my influence to the masses, I discarded the coat and hat which I had continued to wear after my return from England and donned the conventional *dhotee* of my forefathers. The popular enthusiasm was unbounded when I first appeared in public in my national costume. It was like Edmund Sandilli and the missionary Dukwaria returning to their tribes with a blanket and a daub of paint! How they must have been received with open arms by their people and kindred! So I continued to grow in popularity with my countrymen and disfavour with the ruling race as my influence extended. But my success made me indiscreet. I conceived the idea that I held the key to a popular rising against the foreigner, I was mistaken; not in the fact that, however, my countrymen were not ripe for revolt, but they were not prepared to go beyond the "agitation stage" when the time came to strike a blow for liberty.

I was, in consequence, left in the lurch and had no



other alternative but to flee the country, to avoid a prosecution for inciting the people to revolt. It is to this incident, my friends, you are indebted for the honour of counting amongst your members an ex-Civilian!

N. B.—*Though the author of these “character sketches” is obliged, occasionally, to illustrate his subject with examples from life, he begs to assure his readers that in the whole series of stories he has not written a single line intentionally personal. Ridicule, it is true, has been freely used, as in the story of the Ghatak, but he trusts not abused. A page of satire has often done more to effect social reform than a quarto volume of serious writing. Men shrink from ridicule who have no regard for law, religion, or public opinion.*

---

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE STORY OF A PROFESSIONAL BURGLAR.

THE ex-Civilian having finished his interesting narrative the chief called upon Sahib Jaun for the next story, who thus began :—

I am known to the Police of Calcutta as Sahib Jaun, but in almost every other town and district in British India, and there are few places in that vast Empire that I have not honoured with a visit, I was recognised by a different appellation. In fact, I had adopted so many *aliases* in my time, that I have quite forgotten my original name, if I ever had any, which is very doubtful. The name by which I am now known to you all, Sahib Jaun, was given me by the Detective Superintendent of the Calcutta Police, because I bore a striking resemblance to

a celebrated burglar of that name. My parents I had never known. And it was from the mouth of the detective officer who named me Sahib Jaun I first heard anything of my early history. I was being tried at the Criminal Sessions of the Calcutta High Court for petty theft, and as it was my nineteenth offence, while I was scarcely fifteen years of age the presiding Judge expressed a wish, before pronouncing sentence against me, to learn something of my early history. I was consequently remanded to enable the Police to make the necessary enquiries. Here is the result in the very words of the enquiring officer:—

‘I am Superintendent of the Calcutta Detective Police Force. I know the prisoner now before the Court. I produce his former convictions. He was first convicted of theft at the age of eight years. Since then he has had five whippings and undergone thirteen terms of imprisonment. All for petty theft. As requested by your Lordship, I have made careful enquiries regarding the prisoner’s early history. His parents are unknown. It appears he was found at one of the bathing ghats on the Strand Road, when only a few days old, by a woman who had been divorced from her husband because she bore him no offspring. On seeing the deserted child, the woman at once conceived the idea that it might be the means of reconciling her to her husband, and she picked it up and carried it home. Her husband had been away from Calcutta at the time on a pilgrimage, and on his return she presented him with a son and heir, which she said she had given birth to during his absence. The old man was delighted, and received his wife and, as he thought, child, back to his hearth and home, with great ceremonial display. In the joy of his heart he believed that God had given him



a son to comfort his old age, as a reward for having undertaken a pilgrimage to Mecca.

‘But unfortunately for the prisoner his supposed father died when he was only three years of age. The old man left his wife in very good circumstances, with ample means to provide for and educate the child who had been a comfort to his declining years. The prisoner’s reputed mother, however, soon after her husband’s death married again. Her second husband was not only a drunkard, but a notorious gambler, and in the course of a year succeeded in squandering the whole of his wife’s property. Then followed a course of cruel and brutal treatment which, coupled with want and neglect, soon sent her to her grave. The prisoner was now, at the age of four, turned into the street to shift for himself. He joined company with a number of other lads similarly situated, who picked up a living by collecting grain and seeds at the various landing and shipping ghats along the Strand Road. As he grew older and more experienced he took to bleeding the bags of grain as they were being conveyed to the shipping in carts. It is for this offence he has been so frequently convicted. The boys with whom he associated had no house. In the summer they used to sleep at the ghats in the open air, and in the cold winter nights they would skulk into the enclosure of the burning ghat and sleep on the weather side of a funeral pyre for warmth.\*’ Here the Police officer concluded his evidence and the Judge prepared to pass sentence. Before doing so, however, he read me a nice little lecture. He began by saying, ‘Prisoner at the bar, from what I have just heard of your early history, your misfortunes and temptations I am more inclined to consider

\* Fact every word of it !

you a victim to society's neglect than a criminal!' Hope springs eternal in the human breast! and these words of his Lordship encouraged me to hope. I joined my hands closer together, and in a supplicating attitude leaned over the rails of the dock to listen more attentively to what was to follow. The Judge turning to the jury continued, 'Gentlemen, you did your duty in finding the prisoner guilty on the evidence placed before you, and it now rests with me to deal with the culprit. He has been found guilty of committing the offence of theft and has admitted to nineteen previous convictions! But I put it to you, gentlemen, as men of experience, as men of sense, are not this lad's crimes the product of circumstances and temptations for which, in the sight of God, we can scarcely hold him accountable?' (Great sensation in Court and my hopes of acquittal rose higher and higher.) Then addressing himself to me, his Lordship proceeded, 'Prisoner, as society has failed to do its duty by you, I must protect you against society's neglect. You will be imprisoned for seven years! By that time the world will have been educated up to a sense of its duties to its younger and weaker members. In the meantime, you will be sheltered against temptation and demoralization. The fact of such lads pursuing a systematic course of crime is entirely due to the public having hitherto adopted the saying of Cain:—"Am I my brother's keeper?"' Now, however, I am glad to believe that a more righteous feeling is setting in, and I look forward to a more creditable state of things in the future. If I awarded you a short sentence, you would only return to your evil ways and old confederates, before the good age comes. But at the end of seven years society will have grown wiser and good enough to

take care of you. You may then be safely trusted into the haunts of men once more ?’

Here his Lordship leaned back in his chair amidst profound silence. The sentence went like an ice bolt through my heart and literally took my breath away. Jury, Counsel and spectators were astonished. Everybody had expected a totally different conclusion to the Judge’s peroration.

I was removed from the dock and sent to No. 1, Chowringhee, there to remain in duress till the arrival of the social millennium—till the world had grown wise and good enough to take care of me ! I was not incarcerated, mind you, in order to punish me for having done a wrong thing, according to the clear, stern old fashion, which tried to punish for vice as well as for crime. I was not put under restraint in order that by my punishment others might be warned against crime in the future, according to a principle of more modern birth. Nor was I taken possession of and locked up in order that I might be reformed and taught to be good, in obedience to the still more recent theory of punishment for crime. It was not to protect society against me that I was kept in confinement, but rather to protect me against society. Oh ! wise and upright Judge, verily a Daniel has come to judgment. I entered prison a petty pilferer. I left it an accomplished burglar. In consequence of the number of convictions against me I was sent to herd with the “habituals.” There were some twenty of us, nearly all house-breakers ; desperate and daring characters. They used to sit up or lie awake to a late hour every night recounting their exploits and the schemes and subterfuges resorted to in order to avoid detection and elude the Police. Their conversation made a deep and lasting impression upon me.



Sometimes a dispute would arise between two great burglars as to who could break into a house in the shortest possible time. The question was generally settled by the two disputants setting to work with a four-inch nail to see who could displace the first brick from the solid wall of the cell in the shortest possible time, and make the least noise in doing it. In this way I learned many useful lessons which I turned to good and profitable account in after life. With such companions my time in jail passed pleasantly enough. Most of the "habituals" had a deposit with their "fence," which the latter managed to convey into jail through the prison warders. We were therefore, able to procure many luxuries denied to the less fortunate inmates of the other sections of the prison.

In due course my time expired and I was set at liberty. Society I soon discovered was much in the same state as when I quitted it seven years before. People were just as little disposed to depart from the saying of Cain :—"Am I my brother's keeper?" as ever. So I set to work to pay back society for its neglect of its younger and weaker members. My first victim was the Judge who had sent me to prison.\* He was a great collector of ancient coins and I robbed him of the work of a lifetime. I got the information of where the coins were kept from a discharged servant.

After this I had a long and successful career of crime, during which I visited most of the large towns and cities of British India. I made, what in some parts of the world, is deemed necessary to an accomplished gentleman, "The grand tour!" I had only come to grief once in ten years and that was in Assam. But as I was unknown to the Police my sentence was a short one. Nevertheless, it

\* Fact!

was the most profitable period of my life. The jailor was a Bengalee Baboo. He had got to hear of my ability as a burglar and I was not long in finding out his accommodating qualities as a jailor. We, therefore, soon came to an understanding advantageous to both of us. He used to let me out of prison in the evening and receive me back in the morning on condition of sharing the result of the night's adventure.\* This went on during the whole period of my incarceration. The booty collected in that time was large and valuable. But I was cute enough not to bring all that fell into my hands back to prison with me. I buried the most valuable. And it was well I did so, for the Baboo, acting after his kind, on my release refused to deliver up my share of the swag. I had my revenge, however. The burglaries in the neighbourhood of the jail had created quite a sensation throughout the district. The Police were abused and some of them transferred for not being able to discover the house-breakers. I knew that any clue to the crimes would be eagerly caught hold of and followed up. So I caused an anonymous letter to be written to the Deputy Commissioner detailing how the burglaries were committed and where the stolen property was to be found. A search was made which resulted in the arrest and conviction of the jailor.†

Having done so much for the good of society I unearthed my buried treasure and bent my steps towards Calcutta once more.

\* Fact.

† As some of the native papers contradicted the account of the case when it first appeared in the *Englishman* the writer has taken the trouble to have it verified. The jailor was tried by Mr. Driberg of the Assam Commission.

I had scarcely been a week in the city, and had only "cracked one crib," when I fell into the hands of the Philistines again. It occurred in this wise. I had been on my way to a receiver of stolen property in Burra Bazar to dispose of the "swag" taken the previous night, when my old enemy, Reid the detective, who never forgot a face once seen, passed me in the street in a *ticca gharry*. Though I had been absent from Calcutta close upon ten years he recognised me, stopped the *gharry*, jumped out and had his hand through my waist-cloth before you could say "Jack Robinson." Resistance was useless. I was hurried into the "*ticca*" and drove to the Police compound. As the evidence of my late crime was still on my person, I freely admitted what I could not deny, how I had come by it. I was tried and convicted again, this time sentenced to ten years across the "black water."

Pending deportation I was kept in Alipore Jail. While in the solitude of my cell I remembered how on a former occasion my fellow prisoners had by means of a four-inch nail taken a brick out of the solid wall, and it struck me at once that I might be able to effect my escape by the same means. But how was I to get a nail? Here was the hitch. While my mind was brooding over this matter my food was brought in a tin pannican. I noticed that round the rim run a piece of strong iron wire which was overlapped by the tin. After some trouble I extracted the wire. It was about half a yard in length, but rather feeble. So in order to strengthen it, I doubled it in two and twisted it rope fashion. Then having rolled a piece of cloth round one end to save my hand from laceration I set to work. In the course of three nights I had effected an opening in a two-feet brick wall sufficient to pass through.



But here arose another difficulty. I had either to bore through or top the jail wall. The former operation could not be effected in one night, and the latter was extremely dangerous, as there was an armed sentry at every angle of the enclosure. So after a short deliberation I decided to chance mounting the wall instead of breaching it. This is how I went to work. The night was wet and stormy and, of course, favoured the enterprise. The opening from my cell led into the labour yard. Here I had no difficulty in procuring a piece of rope, to the end of which I attached an iron hook. Then throwing the latter over the jail wall and drawing back the rope gently, the hook caught under the outside coping and held fast. I now began to ascend by holding on to the rope and placing my feet against the wall, working my way up hand over hand sailor fashion. But just as my head got above the enclosure a flash of lightning betrayed my presence to the sentry. He made for the spot at once to secure me. As he came up I said to him in an under tone "Hush. The celebrated burglar, Sahib Jaun has just passed out. He is hiding in the jungle there in front of you, make no noise or he will escape." The sentry stood irresolute how to act. I took advantage of his embarrassment and said, "Look here, brother, I am only a short term prisoner in for a few months; if you put in a word for me to the Jail Superintendent, I'll assist you to recapture the notorious Sahib Jaun, and you'll be made a sergeant right off the reel, and and get no end of a reward." The sentry yielded, so I continued, "You must not go down in that garb or the convict will escape. I'll change clothes with you and let you down by the aid of this rope. Sahib Jaun will come forward to congratulate you on your safe descent the moment your feet touch *terra firma* for that is what

we have agreed upon, and you will immediately nobble him and hold fast till I come to your assistance." The sentry was delighted with the proposal. And as his mind at the time was full of the thoughts of rewards and promotion it never occurred to him the risk he incurred by changing clothes with an absconding convict. Accordingly, when all was ready. I made fast one end of the rope with which I had ascended the wall, to the sentry's body, and the other end to which the hook was secured to the coping on the inside of the wall. But I took good care in adjusting the length of rope by which the sentry was to descend, that it would not allow him to reach the ground by a few feet, so when he had got to the end of his "tether" I left him there, swinging in mid air, and bolted for my life. I knew that a large reward would be sent to every Police station in the country, so I determined to turn my back on British territory for ever. I wandered about from one native State to another until I had the good fortune of falling in with this honourable band of outlaws where I have lived in peace and security ever since.

"Bravo! bravo!" was the exclamation of all present when Sahib Jaun had made an end of his story. And the band of outlaws retired for the night.

---

## CHAPTER XXI.

---

### ALLY MAHOMED RELATES HIS EXPERIENCE OF TRAVELLING ON THE BRAHMAPOOTRA IN THE 'GOOD OLD DAYS.'

SAHIB JAUN having finished his amusing and entertaining narrative, the chief called up Ally Mahomed for the next story, who thus began.

I am a native of Chittagong and a follower of the Prophet. I was originally named Ally Mahomed, but having served with Europeans from the age of eight, I always went by the name of the "Boy" and answered to no other. By the time I had reached my sixteenth year I could speak English fairly well and understood it much better. This accomplishment was a passport to well paid service, especially with gentlemen deficient in the vernacular of



the country, I acted in the double capacity of interpreter and body servant. My first employment in this capacity was with the captain of an inland steamer plying in the Brahmapootra. My master was a great poet and used to spend his spare moments in spinning rhymes. I was not aware of this failing of master's when I first went on board, and was nearly coming to grief in consequence. One day as the steamer was passing a bathing ghat, where a number of village beauties were disporting themselves like sea nymphs in their native element, the rhyming fit came upon master. Note-book and pencil were out in a trice.

But he stuck fast in the first couplet. He put down his note-book on the table and commenced to pace the deck as if he were walking for a wager. I really thought he had taken leave of his senses, for he would occasionally stop short and say to himself "Yes, I have it now" and fly to the note-book. But just as he had prepared to commit what he had been thinking about, to paper, he discovered he had not exactly got hold of what he wanted. "No," he would say to himself, "it won't do. The sound is all right, but it is wanting in sense." So he would fling the note-book on the table and start to pace the deck with more rapidity than ever. Now and again he would scratch his head and mutter something to himself, like a man thinking aloud. In the innocence of my heart on one of these occasions I ran on deck and enquired if master wanted anything. The words were scarcely out of my mouth before he had me by the ear, and in a hissing savage tone, exclaimed, "You young rascal, if ever you interrupt me again in this manner by the living God I'll pitch you overboard! Do you hear, sir! Do you hear, sir!" and he shook my head like a baby's rattle! "Yes!

Yes! Oh! master I'll never do it again" I blurted out in terror and pain, for his fingers were tightening on my ear. "Don't then, you young rascal!" and he gave me a shove that sent me half way across the deck.

Ever after this adventure I had a wholesome dread of meeting master when the rhyming fit was on him, especially if he was in search of a word. In such a conjuncture I was always equally as industrious as master in search of a place to hide in case of danger. But I had my revenge in the end. The steamer was anchored one evening at Gaulhati, my master had gone on shore, and during his absence some *sahibs* came to the ghaut and enquired the name of the commander. I told them he was called on board the "Walking Gasser." The gentlemen laughed and asked me to explain the meaning of so strange an appellation for the skipper of an inland steamer. So I told them my master is a great poet. But the inspiration only came upon him by fits and starts. When, therefore, he is in the rhyming mood, he is sullen and silent and will pace the deck like a mad man. It is a common saying on board when master's quick step is heard on deck "he's at it again in search of a word." But when the rhyming fit wears off him, and he turns from poetry to prose, he has such a command of words that they seem to force their way without his will. He gasses like a steam engine; and tells the most improbable stories. This weakness has gained him the sobriquet of the "gasser." I improved upon it by calling him the "Walking Gasser." The gentlemen walked away highly amused, and from that day to this he has been known all over the great Brahmapootra as the Walking Gasser.

But I soon grew tired of serving a master poetically inclined. Besides he had another great failing, which an

English-speaking servant can never forget or forgive. He had no love for the bottle. This in my estimation was an unpardonable offence. I had always been accustomed to a drop of the "crater,"—as the Irishman would say, and could not now do well without it. So I determined to look out for another situation. I had not long to wait. On the very day the vessel touched at Goalundo there was an upward steamer leaving for Dibrugarh. She was full up with European passengers. The captain was short of a cuddy servant so I transferred myself to him. Before I had been many days on board the captain promoted me to the cabin. Here I was in clover. My new master was the very antithesis of my last. There was not a poetical sentiment in his whole soul. In fact, he was the most prosaic and matter-of-fact individual I had ever served. But he had three good qualities: he was fond of the bottle, the pipe, and spinning a yarn. These accomplishments made him very popular with the passengers who felt the time hang heavy on their hands. I am speaking of the good old days before the despatch boats were put on the run. The voyage then from Goalundo to Dibrugarh took six weeks to accomplish, and any kind of amusement on board was a god-send to the passengers.

I will endeavour to give you a description of the captain. He was rather dumpy to begin with, had a red weather-beaten face, a rubicund nose, white eyebrows, and a forest of grey whiskers which joined his hair, and struggled all round his face in uncombed luxuriance. But for the genial brightness of his eyes, which fairly twinkled again with good humour, that florid face and fringe of hair might have suggested comparisons more suitable to the inmates of the Zoo than the commander of an inland steamer. Yes, it was the expression of the eyes that re-



deemed all. And, although, Captain Hurricane—for that was his name—was not as good looking a man as his poetial brother, he was the very incarnation of good humour, geniality, and kindness. He was old in the service, and had been respected and trusted by his employers. He had not, however, spent all his life long in the dull and somewhat monotonous inland traffic of the great Indian rivers. He had been, he said, brought up a sailor, and had rounded all the capes and headlands known to British seamen. He had been roasted—semi-roasted anyhow, as he himself expressed it, at Gambia and Sierra Leone; he had been frozen into the semblance of an animated icicle in the vicinity of the North Pole; he had inhaled the orange-scented breezes of the Azores; he had encountered all the hurricanes, typhoons and cyclones which it is the fate of an old deep sea sailor to encounter; and he had now come at last to chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy—and a quid of Cavendish, on board an inland steamer!

He was getting on to the sere and yellow leaf and had to give up deep sea sailing in consequence, and the river seemed to him a kind of compromise between a life on the ocean wave and ashore. It was an evil certainly, so he said, but a necessary and unavoidable one. The water of the great Brahmapootra was not of the bluest, especially in the rains, but still it was water, and that was a comfort to him, and, as he averred, a mercy for which he was eminently thankful. He was an excellent hand at spinning a yarn and used to keep the passengers in roars of laughter from morning to night. In addition to this he was a keen observer and his yarns were not only amusing but instructive.

“When I first joined the River steam Navigation Com-

pany," he used to say to the passengers, "there was not the same facility for travelling that there is now. But," taking the pipe from his mouth and winking hard at his audience, "if we had less accommodation, less comforts, and moved slower, we had more passengers, and were much better paid than we are now. There was no Kaw-nea and Dharlla Railway, and no despatch boats to bother us, or take the wind out of our sails, and cargo out of our holds, and the passengers out of our cabins. Reid and Taylor between them have played the deuce with the service. We had mighty men for passengers in those days, civil and military. We had chief commissioners, deputy commissioners, judges, and tea planters by the score; with their wives and families up and down; we had generals, colonels, majors, captains, subs, aye and whole regiments and detachments of soldiers; we carried bond and free alike. We took up pretty girls just come out from England to be married, and a year or two afterwards we took some of them down again widows! and others with blooming children and happy husbands. We have taken up young gentlemen with capital that were going to double it in tea, in a year or two, and we took them back again beggars! We have taken up adventurers with scarcely a second shirt to their back and we have brought them down again shining like a tailor's pattern card, and as rich as Rothschild! Its a strange lottery, I can tell you that going up to Assam both for young men and young women. They may be shipwrecked and lose their all, or they may make a prosperous voyage and return millionaires, or if not exactly that, at least rich enough to settle down in comfort in the Old Country while their blue peter is still floating at the masthead! But," and here the captain calls out 'Boy! brandy shrab lao.'

“I think, gentlemen, it is time to splice the main brace.” The skipper’s proposal was put to the vote and carried *nem con*. And I hastened to the pantry to procure the lush. On my return, the captain proceeded to splice the main brace, a nautical operation, in the performance of which he was ably assisted by his audience, landsmen though they all were.

The steamer was making but little progress, for we had entered a narrow part of the river where the current was strong against us. Sometimes we appeared to be going backwards instead of forwards. But the captain explained to the passengers that this was owing to the sinuosity of the channel, and that the steamer was in reality making good headway, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary. “Besides,” said he, “it don’t much matter, does it? None of you I suppose are hurrying to be married, or to take possession of large fortunes? But its the way of the world. Men, at least some men, don’t know when they are well off. They are impatient of restraint and want to hurry through their earthly existence at a break-neck pace. Why, look at me. I’m in no hurry, never was in a hurry in all my life. I jog along at my ease and take things as they come, but never grumble. So long as the steamer is actually making head way I am satisfied. It is the leeway that puts my pipe out. You see whether I do the run in six weeks or as many months its all the same to me. It makes no difference, when pay day comes round at the end of the month, and that’s a blessing that those railway chaps don’t enjoy with all their hurrying, and bustling, and scuffling, and jostling, and confusion worse confounded. My advice to you, gentlemen, never travel by rail so long as there is a dug-out available and a river to float it. Or if you do, and you have a wife



and family, go first to a life insurance office and leave them provided for before you undertake a journey so risky. There is no saying when you may be knocked into a cocked hat like the passengers in the Hathras smash! You know my favourite maxim? I will tell you. The man who plays at certainties, however small the gain, will have most money in the box at the end of the game."

Here one of the passengers interposed, "Captain, we, or at least some of us, have seen too much of the world to be imposed upon by a plausible maxim. My idea of a popular aphorism is this, if it be very moral and very true, it may serve as an excellent copy for a charity school-boy. If it be sparkling and whimsical, it may make a capital motto for an essay. But few indeed of the many wise and witty Apophthegms which have been uttered from the time of the seven sages of Greece, to the present day, have ever prevented the commission of a single foolish action. At least that is my experience."

This concluded the conversation for the night. The captain evidently thought the subject was drifting beyond his depth, or as he himself expressed it '*topa meela nahin*,' so he wisely proposed, as the best way of changing the conversation, that his audience should join him in what he was pleased to call a 'nightcap' and retire to the land of dreams.

The passengers were seated on deck the following morning enjoying their *chota hazaree* when Captain Hurricane made his appearance. He had done his work for the day, he said, had written out yesterday's log, had gone round with his officers and seen everything ship-shape and British fashion, had kicked a darky or two just to keep his hand in. Like the Irishman in the Hibernian legends, he was mighty handy with his feet! He had filled the

calumet of peace and was now thoroughly prepared to smoke it.

The steamer had rounded a bend in the river and Goalpara burst into view! "Gentlemen, what do you think of that for a picture" exclaimed the skipper, drawing the attention of his audience to the scenery. All pronounced it lovely! "Do you know," continued the skipper, "I had passed this spot a hundred times without observing anything particular about the place, until it was pointed out to me by a great admirer of the beauties of nature."

"Indeed," remarked one of the passengers, "Let us hear the story."

"And welcome gentlemen. It occurred in this way. I had Sir William Hunter on board. He was collecting information for the *Indian Gazetteer*, and had been seated here on deck enjoying his *chota hazaree* as you all are doing now. It was about this time of the day exactly. The calm of the grey morning when the maiden blush of a new born day was yet hardly discernible upon nature's face. The thin veil of haze, which night in despair, had thrown across the gleam of early morn, before departing to his shades, still lingered and seemed reluctant to depart. The blending of colour into tints which alternately darkened and lightened the foliage as the great orb of day rose above the horizon, magical in appearance. The sombre aspect of the still and silent leaves upon their branches were not lightly to be moved or swayed as became their age and character, by every gentle breath which sighed upon them. The supple, graceful willows, unconscious of their native charm and beauty drooped towards the stream. The long, dank grass itself, each blade rustling and rejoicing with its neighbour at the near approach of day, and assuming lines which though colourless,

were refreshing to see from their contrast to the surrounding verdure. The very sounds in the air; the sigh of the rising breeze; the ripple of the water, and that unutterable stillness, which appeals so powerfully to the heart and soul, all combined to add enchantment to the view.

"It was only a muddy river, with high banks, and trees, and scrub all round. That is what a plain matter-of-fact man would have said, but to an admirer of nature the panorama was inexpressibly beautiful!

"Such was the scene that burst upon Sir William Hunter as the steamer rounded that bend in the river. He immediately jumped to his feet in an ecstasy of delight and exclaimed, 'How grandly beautiful!' 'Yes,' replied I with a doleful shake of the head, 'but its a terrible spot for all that—the grave of the white man I might say! Cholera breaks out here occasionally and sweeps all before it.' 'You don't say so!' exclaimed Sir William in astonishment. 'Tis a fact I assure you,' returned I, with the gravest and most serious face imaginable. 'Why' half the white population of the place were carried off by it in one night!' 'I will just make a note of that' said Sir William, and he called for his journal, 'I suppose,' he continued 'I can make use of your name as my authority?' 'Oh certainly' I made answer.

"When Sir William Hunter had committed the above facts to paper, he turned to me and enquired, 'And, may I ask you what the white population of this place might be?' 'Well said I, stroking my chin and looking serious and thoughtful, 'let me see; yes, before the outbreak of the epidemic alluded to, the white population consisted of a community of two, but after the terrible scourge had subsided there was only a single individual left to tell the tale! Aye! man, if you had seen the great *Gazetteer* at



that moment. He turned all the colours of the rainbow in a second of time, shut up his journal with a snap, and walked doggedly away. We never exchanged words for the remainder of the voyage."

This story amused the passengers immensely and they all laughed right heartily at the way the skipper had "sold" the great man, as some of them expressed it.

After leaving Goalpara, the skipper appeared amongst his passengers once more. One of them remarked, "Captain, don't you ever feel tired of this dull and monotonous life?" "Well, yes, occasionally, a fellow does feel a bit rusty, but there is always something to break the monotony. To have no passengers on board is the exception and not the rule. That is one blessing; and what with yarning, and reading, and pegging, and smoking, and sleeping I can always manage to rub along easily enough. It was pretty hard lines for me at first, but you see one gets used to it. But if a fellow don't care much for racketing, or if, like me, his racketing days are over, it answers pretty well. It is a solemn kind of life too. A man can take himself to task and review his past history without much fear of interruption. Surrounded on all sides by waving jungle, seeing nothing but the sparkle of the fireflies, and the twinkling and shooting of stars, in the heavens; hearing nothing but the sighing of the wind, the wash of the water, the croaking of frogs, the buzz of insects, and the howling of jackals, one is encouraged to ask himself a few serious questions."

Here the skipper was interrupted again by one of the passengers enquiring if he didn't come out of the cross examination of his inner self with a good number of marks to his credit?

"Well, you see," continued the captain, "I think, on

the whole, I did pretty well. But then a fellow generally answers questions put to himself to his own satisfaction, at least that is my experience. But if a chap is well ballasted and dunnaged and has lain a pretty fair course all his life, why, then he can sail very close to the wind without much fear of capsizing. I don't pretend to be better than my neighbours you know. I'm not much of a church goer, or that kind of thing, but if I see a rock ahead I try and steer clear of it. It is by affecting to be more immoral and irreligious than you really are, you gain a reputation of being practical and honest; as long as you are open and frank in words, nobody will suspect hypocrisy in your designs. That is my motto. I have been often so disgusted with the hypocrisy of virtue, that I have taken to practice the hypocrisy of vice; sincerity, I find, is no less a covering than lying; a frieze great coat wraps a man, or woman either, as well as a Spanish cloak. If ever I were to turn Methodist preacher which is not very likely, my text would be, 'Look here, my friends, you just look out for rocks ahead and steer clear of them, lie a straight course and keep a good look out *forward* and your bark will reach port in safety. But if you neglect these precautions you'll get stranded, knock holes in your timbers or come to grief in some other way, which will put you out of your red letter *A. I.*'

Here the skipper was suddenly interrupted in his sermon by the steamer bumping on a sandbank. At this juncture some one was cruel enough to remark "All owing to the captain not having a good look-out *forrad!*" But the skipper was too busily engaged to hear the remark. After the position of the vessel had been examined and soundings taken, the captain returned to inform his passengers that the steamer was fast for two or three days

at the very least. "All we can do," he said, "is to put out anchors, the current, in time, will bring her head round to deep water as the sand shifts from her bottom." This was doleful news and caused a good deal of grumbling. Some of the passengers were uncharitable enough to insinuate that the steamer had been grounded on purpose because the captain had a "paying freight" and the longer he could spin out the voyage the more profitable it would be to himself.

But the captain did all in his power, nevertheless, to comfort and amuse his passengers. One gentleman had a dogcart on board and wanted to dispose of it. The skipper made a bid for the trap on condition that it would suit his horse. The bid was accepted and the dogcart was sent on shore for the purpose of making a trial. Most of the passengers including the owner had gone ashore in the same boat with the trap. Presently the captain appeared in another boat with his clothes horse! Of course the skipper's steed didn't suit the trap, or the trap the steed, and the captain in consequence claimed the right of revoking the contract. But the incident caused no end of amusement, some of the young sparks among the party caught a buffalo and yoked it to the dog-cart instead of the captain's clothes horse and had a good run across country winding up, as might be expected, with a delightful spill! which had the desired effect, however, for everybody by this time had quite forgotten the mishap to the steamer. In fact, after the vessel had floated and was well on her way up the river many of the passengers longed for another grounding, if only to see what amusement the captain would contrive to cure them of grumbling.

The night before reaching Dibrugarh a circumstance occurred which compelled me to seek safety in flight. One



of the Baboo passengers had gone down to the pantry to negotiate with the butler for the balance of the *sahib's* dinner. In his absence I made love to his wife. I was caught *de facto* as the cant phrase is among lawyers, in the very act. The Baboo's friends would have torn me to pieces if I had not jumped overboard and, favoured by the darkness, escaped for my life. To quote our learned brother Ram-Jaun-Chunder-Chuckerbutty, it is to these circumstances, my friends, you are indebted for the honour of having a fresh water sailor amongst you to-night. I was forced to flee British territory to avoid a prosecution for loving another man's wife. I am not the first, thank God, who has come to grief for the same offence.

---

## CHAPTER XXII.

---

### THE BURMAN RELATES HOW ARMS AND AMMUNITION ARE SMUGGLED OUT OF BRITISH INDIA.

SAHIB JAUN having finished his interesting and amusing narrative, the chief next called upon Naga Pyan *alias* Kurrim Shaik to continue the entertainment by a recital of his experience before becoming a dacoit, whereupon the Burman began in this fashion:—

I am a Burman by birth and the son of a once powerful and influential Mintha of Upper Burma. My father was a man of a very religious turn of mind, built a pagoda, in which he spent much of his time in prayer, gave alms to the poor, sympathised with and succoured the oppressed, was loved and worshipped by the people, and hated by

the king. The latter had long been on the look out for some pretence to throw my father into prison, but he was slow to act for he feared his subjects. Matters were brought to a crisis on the imposition of a new and oppressive tax, which many were unable to pay. The king's oppressions had driven all the trading and moneyed classes into British territory and those who remained were too poor to meet the extortionate demands. The people in their extremity flocked to my father's pagoda for comfort and counsel. They begged and implored him to free them from the power of their oppressor. In a weak moment he yielded to their entreaty, and unfurled the black flag, the standard of revolt. He succeeded in a very short time in getting together a fairly good following, built a stockade in a jungle clearing, and hurled defiance at the king and his army. My father's chief want was arms and ammunition. Not having these he was completely crippled, and forced to act on the defensive till arms could be procured. Accordingly, after consulting with the chief men who had flocked to his standard, my father resolved upon sending me to Calcutta in company of one or two trustworthy followers, to procure the necessary munitions of modern warfare, to enable him to take the field against the king's troops. As it was a penal offence to export arms and ammunition out of British India, it was necessary to have recourse to smuggling. Accordingly, two men were attached to my party who knew every rope of the ship in the smuggling line. Everything was now ready for a start, but our stockade was invested by the king's troops, and the question was, how were we to get away? A council of war was held to solve the difficulty. After some deliberation it was at last decided that my father's followers would make a feint attack upon the king's troops at a



particular point and when the attention of the enemy was engaged at the point of attack, my party would escape from the stockade in the opposite direction and disappear into the heart of the jungle. The stratagem was successful, and we got clear away.

I made straight for the nearest steamer station in the Irrawaddy, which was reached in safety, and booked for Rangoon. From Rangoon after converting my stock of valuables into Indian money I proceeded, without delay, by one of Mackinnon, Mackenzie's steamers to Calcutta. I had with me a letter of introduction to a countryman and a friend of my father's carrying on business as a merchant and trader in Canning Street, and I made for his residence on landing. So after looking about me for a day or two, I decided upon engaging a house for a month in a quiet and unfrequented locality, and commenced operations at once. The house selected was in a blind lane off Chitpore Road. No place could have been better suited to the purpose. It was in this house that the arms and ammunition purchased in the bazar, in small quantities at a time, were collected and concealed. Here I had them packed up in the heart of bales of piecegoods for despatch by steamer to Burma. I had to go about the business very cautiously for the shopkeepers told me that the officer who had the working of the Arms Act in Calcutta was very strict. I suggested as a specific for the complaint of over officiousness which appeared to afflict the Calcutta Police, the application of a little "palm oil." But the shopkeeper, waving his hand, said "*Nahin hoga!*" "Well then, perhaps," returned I "if money won't do, I have a few sparkling rubies fresh from the king's mines which might take the *sahib's* fancy." "Equally futile" was the vendor's laconic reply. "The *sahib* is a married man

and the last trinket he presented to his mistress was the wedding ring. Had he been single, a present of rubies might have found a tender spot in his heart. But he's a married man, and a Scotchman to boot, with a nature as hard as his own native "Whinstone." "Well, well," said I, "I must only try and elude his vigilance the best way I can." The shopkeepers intimated that this was the only course open to me, but offered to meet me half way, and afford me every assistance. A plan was suggested, which, if followed, they assured me, would be almost certain of success. It was this. I was to purchase a quantity of ammunition and a gun from each shop daily, giving a different name and address on each occasion, until the quantity required was completed. These small purchases, they said, would not excite suspicion when the *sahib* came to examine their books. This procedure was strictly followed. And in order to prevent jealousy amongst the vendors and keep them from betraying one another, all had an equal share of my custom.

In this way I soon got together the full quantity required, both of arms and ammunition, and set about getting it ready for shipment. Before despatching my first consignment to the steamer, I resolved to have a good look at the man I most dreaded in the business, the Detective Superintendent, who I learned had charge of the working of the Arms Act. I mentioned this to one of the shopkeepers, and he told me the thing could be easily managed. "I will send a man with you," he said, "who will take you to the Police compound. You can pretend to have come to lay a charge against some person unknown, for picking your pocket in the bazar." This, I thought, was an excellent device, and I agreed to it at once. When I reached the Police Office and told the *sahib* the nature of

my business, he immediately put me through a severe cross-examination and made me contradict myself half a dozen of times in as many minutes. Having succeeded in making me feel extremely nervous and uncomfortable, I was coolly told the Detective branch of the police did not take up petty cases of pocket-picking and the like. Then, turning to my companion, the *sahib* enquired if he knew where Bow Bazar thana was situated. The man answered in the affirmative, "Very good," continued the officer; "take the complainant to the Superintendent, he resides next door to the thana, and he'll enquire into the case." I was about to make my *salaam* and retire when the *sahib*, with a knowing wink, apparently understood by a few European Policemen standing by, and a roguish twinkle of an eye like that of an eagle, remarked, "Don't think because the name of the officer to whom I am sending you is associated with all that is gentle and timid in nature, (I allude, of course, to the young of a certain herbivorous animal that changes its name to mutton after its decease) that he has any sympathy with, or compassion for, the criminal classes! He's death upon pick-pockets!" I now began to realise the fact that the detective had seen through my device, for all the Policemen present burst into a loud roar of laughter. I consequently *salaamed* with the best possible grace, and slunk away, dejected and crest-fallen. I could have wished myself anywhere else, but where I was. After leaving the Police compound and having seen all I wanted to see, and more than I had bargained for, I did not proceed to Bow Bazar thana to interview the gentleman named after the young of a certain herbivorous animal that changes its name to mutton after its decease, or assistant either, a gentleman who outdoes his master in this respect, for he has taken his cognomen



from a certain omnivorous animal that changes its mane twice after its decease, first to pork, and at a later period, to bacon, but turned down Chitpore Road to my lodgings.

The Detective Officer, whose presence I had just left, as I expected, rightly concluded, from my demeanour and hesitating manner in replying to questions, that I had some other object in view than that of laying a criminal complaint against an unknown pick-pocket; had me followed by one of his myrmidons; and when he heard I had turned down Chitpore Road instead of going to Bow Bazar thana, as directed, conjectures assumed the shape of certainty, and arrangements were made to have my movements secretly watched for a few days. Consequently a human sleuth hound was set on my track. Of course, I suspected nothing, and the day after my adventure at the Police Office, I set about despatching my first consignment of arms and ammunition per steamer to Burmah. But instead of me watching the Police, the Police were watching me! And they did watch me to some purpose. For about two hours after I had sent my first two packages on board booked as piecegoods, a messenger came running to me and said in the name of holy Buddha make yourself scarce! The two packages of arms and ammunition have been seized by the police and the men who booked them, Serjaway and Wajaway, the professional smugglers, on whose sagacity we relied, are in custody!" I was horrified. "My poor father's prospects blasted!" I ejaculated in broken accents, for I could scarcely articulate. I could have sat down and cried, but there was no time for this outward show of inward grief. So, hastily snatching up the bag that contained my money and valuables I bolted from the house, which still contained evidence of the guilty trans-

action in which I was engaged. I went straight to my friend in Canning Street and told him what had occurred. He was as much surprised as I had been on hearing of the disaster. I could see by the expression of his face, that he believed I had got myself involved in a dangerous business. And on being pressed he openly said as much. "Do you think then" I enquired, "that the Police will force the two men, now in custody to betray me?" "No, no," was the prompt reply "that is not exactly what I apprehend. The Police here use strategy and not torture, to discover what they want to know." "If that's all," said I, "two can play at that game." I thought that, probably, the prisoners might be put on the rack, as we do in Burmah, and tortured till they confessed and gave up their accomplices. "If torture is not resorted to." I continued, "I am safe; the men, I know, will not, of their own accord, disclose their secret and mine."

In this I was correct. The Police immediately after the seizure of the arms and ammunition made for the house which I had occupied off Chitpore Road, but failing to find me, never came near my friend's house in Canning Street. This convinced me that the two men in custody were true to their salt. With my friend's consent I remained in hiding at his place to watch the result of the case. I employed the best counsel I could procure in Calcutta to defend the prisoners. The case was first heard by the Chief Presidency Magistrate, who, after several postponements to enable the Police to make enquiries about the defendants in Burmah, ultimately committed the prisoners for trial at the ensuing Sessions of the High Court. All effort was made to get the accused released on bail pending the opening of the Criminal Sessions, but the Magistrate, in view of the serious charge

against them, would not hear of it. The Judges were moved with the same object, but with no better result.

The shopkeepers who sold the arms and ammunition were in a terrible funk when they heard of the seizure and the arrest of the prisoners. They expected every moment that their turn would come next. When the arms and ammunition were traced to their shops they were forced to admit what they could not well deny, the sales, but urged in defence that they had been themselves deceived by the purchaser's giving wrong names and addresses. This evidence, of course, told against the prisoners with damning effect. It was, therefore, an understood thing that no steps would be taken against the vendors till after the case against the purchasers was decided, as the evidence of the former was necessary to insure a conviction of the latter. The shopkeepers knew this. They, therefore, combined and tried to come the mamlatdars' dodge over the authorities. They would, they said, come forward as witnesses and insure the conviction of the accused if they were given a guarantee that their statements would not be used in evidence against themselves. But they had stronger men to deal with in Bengal than the corrupt mamlatdars had in Bombay, and their proposal was rejected with the contempt it deserved. The Government officials in Calcutta had read Macaulay, and the lesson taught by the great essayist had not been thrown away upon them. The shopkeepers baffled in their design resorted to other tactics. They formed a conspiracy to get the prime mover in the prosecution, the Detective Superintendent out of the way, before the opening of the Criminal Sessions. This is what was done. A dealer in arms and ammunition carrying on business in Chandney Bazar applied for the renewal of his license,



which had just expired, or was about to expire. This man's gunpowder godown was a small detached building some distance away from his business premises. Its situation and construction was admirably suited to the carrying out of the diabolical plot the vendors had in view. Before granting a new license the officer responsible for the working of the Arms Act had to inspect this gunpowder godown and certify that it was a safe and fit place for the storage of explosives. The shopkeepers knew the practice well. Arrangements were made with the officer to inspect the premises on a given day and at a stated hour. Accordingly, at the time agreed upon, the Superintendent rode up to the spot where the store godown was situated. The shopkeeper was waiting to receive him. Before dismounting the officer looked about for his syce, but not seeing him anywhere near, the shopkeeper volunteered to hold the horse. The offer was accepted and the Superintendent dismounted and proceeded to inspect the godown. It was, as I have already stated, a small detached demi-upper-roomed building. The upper portion, where the gunpowder was usually stored, was approached by stone steps from the outside. The inspection did not occupy more than two minutes. When the officer returned to the street, he observed that the door leading to the lower apartments was padlocked. He therefore enquired what was kept on the ground floor. The shopkeeper said the ground flat was empty. "I would like to see the place," said the officer, "before granting you a certificate." The shopkeeper stammered out an evasive reply, to the effect that he had lost the key of the padlock. This put the officer on his "metal" and aroused his suspicions. "Well," said he, "if the lower apartments are empty a padlock without a key is not of much value," and lifting up a

hammer from a stall close by he proceeded to knock off the lock. The moment the shopkeeper saw his design he let go the horse and bolted for his life. When the officer entered the lower apartments, to the building he had come to inspect, a strange sight presented itself to his astonished gaze! An open barrel of blasting powder stood in the centre of the room connected by a train from the door which had just been forced open. On making a closer inspection it was found that the train passed under the door which did not close completely at the bottom when shut. And on the ground near the commencement of the train were found half a dozen matches with the top broken off. Evidently an attempt had been made to fire the train while the Superintendent was engaged inspecting the rooms on the upper floor. But in the hurry and flurry of the moment, the matches could not be got to ignite. And so the plot failed and the officer was saved from falling a victim to the infernal device of a second Guy Faux!

In the enquiry which followed it came to light, that had the diabolical plot succeeded an ingenious story was ready to account for the explosion. Namely: that the Police Officer had entered the room with a lighted cigar in his mouth, and must have dropped some of the burning ashes into a barrel of gunpowder left open for his inspection. I never learned how the case terminated, for on the day following the attempt on the officer's life, I received news from Burmah, that my father had been treacherously murdered, and all his followers either killed or made prisoners. I consequently hurried back to Burmah with as little delay as possible to ascertain full details of the sad misfortune. This is how it happened. The king, finding it impossible to drive my father from his stronghold or to

enter it by force, hired a notorious dacoit leader named Naga Kwah, a man who since the annexation of Upper Burmah, has given the British troops a lot of trouble, to proceed to the invested stockade, enter it privately as a friend, and propose to assist its defenders with men and arms. My father fell into the trap thus skilfully set for him. Naga Kwah had first written, making offers of assistance under pretence that he had an old grudge against the king, and only wanted an opportunity to pay it off. This threw my father off his guard. An appointment was accordingly made to discuss the matter in person, and the great dacoit leader was secretly introduced into the stockade during a storm of wind and rain. The result of this interview was that the followers of the robber chief were smuggled into my father's stronghold in small batches at a time to the number of four or five hundred fighting men, all armed to the teeth. No one suspected treachery. It was my father's habit to sleep apart from his men. This gave the traitor an opportunity of assassinating him secretly, and without creating any disturbance in camp. So one night when everything was still, the camp-fires smouldering to ashes, the scattered forms lying about on the grass buried in sleep, Naga Kwah seizing his *dah*, crept stealthily to where my father lay slumbering unconscious of the evil. He bent down over the sleeper, for he would not deprive him of life while prostrate, and whispered in his ear "Minla Gyee!" My father started up, and the moment he moved his head was taken off at a single pass of the knife and carried to the king. This was the signal for a general massacre! The dacoits had been waiting for the word from their leader, and the moment it was given, they jumped up, *dah* in hand, and butchered the unconscious sleepers. The



king's troops were at the same time let into the stockade to assist in the general slaughter. A few of the leaders only were spared, in order that they might be put to death by slow torture at the king's palace for the amusement of his wives and household. When all was over, a strict search was made for me ; for I was hated and feared almost as much as my father had been. A large reward was offered for my apprehension and emissaries were sent out all over British Burmah to hunt me down and assassinate me whenever and wherever found.

Thus finding my life unsafe in my own country, and my liberty uncertain even in British India, like my friend Sahib Jaun's, when he went to prison for seven years, I took shelter in a native State there to await the coming of fine weather. But a life of inaction was hateful to me, so I changed my name and religion and joined this celebrated band of dacoits.

Before bringing my story to an end, I may as well tell you that the two prisoners in the Arms Smuggling Case were tried at the Calcutta High Court before Mr. Justice Phear, charged with being in possession of arms and ammunition and attempting to export the same in contravention of Act XXXI of 1860. The Advocate-General, the Honourable G. C. Paul, prosecuted on behalf of Her Majesty's Indian Government. The prisoners were ably defended by two of the leading barristers of the Calcutta High Court. After a protracted trial the accused were acquitted, in the teeth of the most convincing evidence of their guilt. The defence set up was that the defendants were the unconscious tools of a man not in custody. That, of course, was your humble servant !

A Calcutta journal, the *Englishman* a few days after the trial, in an able and well written article strongly condemned the verdict of the jury. The article, which is too long quote,

opened as follows :—“The verdict of the jury in the case of *Queen v. Sujaway Mugh and Wajaway Mugh*, tried at the last Criminal Sessions of the High Court before Mr. Justice Phear, for being in possession of, and attempting to export out of British India arms and ammunition in contravention of Act XXXI of 1860, shows that it is high time that the petty jury list should be revised, and an endeavour made to select as much as possible intelligent and educated men to decide important cases of this kind in future. If ever there was a case which required care and attention on the part of the jury, the above was pre-eminently one. \* \* \* \* \*. The journal was right; a special jury should have been empanelled to try this case.

The dealer who attempted, but failed, to put one of the principal witnesses, the officer in charge of the case, out of the way, was convicted, but only on a minor charge, the attempt to fire the mine could not be brought home to him, as he was holding the police officer's horse at the time, and the name of his accomplice did not transpire. His business, however, was ruined, for in addition to a heavy fine his license was cancelled and his stock-in-trade confiscated.

---

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE STORY OF A POLICE SPY!

WHEN the Burman had made an end of his entertaining narrative, for which he was highly applauded, the chief called upon Haran Das for the next story; who instantly began in this manner:—

I am known to my friends under the cognomen of Haran Das, but like our distinguished brother Sahib Jaun, (may his shadow never grow less,) I had passed under numerous *aliases* in my time. I had also like our worthy brother aforesaid, commenced a career of crime at a very early age, and graduated in the Strand Road academy for young thieves. But I was a restless “cuss” and could never settled down to any particular branch of our profession. From bleeding grain bags at the shipping and landing



ghaunts I took to pocket-picking; and from pocket-picking to shop-lifting; and from shop-lifting to card-sharping; and from card-sharping to the confidence trick; and from the confidence trick to passing stolen notes; and from passing stolen notes to pimping; and from pimping to opium-smuggling; and from opium-smuggling to decoying soldiers and sailors into empty houses, making them drunk, and then robbing them; from decoying soldiers and sailors to their ruin, to corrupting the servants of Europeans for the purpose of ascertaining where their masters and mistresses kept their valuables, in what part of the house and at what hour they retired to rest, and other particulars necessary to a successful night attack on the premises.

But this constant change of front was not considered in strict accordance with the code of honour observed amongst the different fraternities throughout the city, which was that a man should adopt one branch of the criminal profession and stick to it. I had been poaching on every man's preserve, had a finger in everybody's pie, and was consequently outcasted. None of the regular profession would admit me into their set. They called me a *pariah*. The receivers of stolen property were warned against doing business with me. This was the severest blow of all. It deprived me of a market for the fruits of my honest industry.

But I had my revenge. I turned police informer (*goinda*) and was instrumental in bringing most of my persecutors to grief. My first essay in the art of "aiding the police in the detection of crime" took place on the river Hooghly, in the port of Calcutta. A *darogah*, who wanted to become an inspector, employed me to get up a sensational case to bring him to notice. "I will give you," said he, "besides the reward, one hundred rupees

from my own private purse on my promotion, if you are successful." I promised to do my level best, and left the presence of the *darogah* to mature my plans. This is what I did. I went straight to the *manjee* of a cargo boat employed in conveying grain and seeds from the merchants' godowns along the strand bank, to the shipping. On learning that he had linseed on board I offered to purchase forty maunds at a reasonable rate. My offer was accepted. It was then arranged between us that the cargo boat should moor for the night at a quiet and unfrequented ghaut, and that I would come off in a *dinghee* an hour or so before daybreak and bear off the booty. The cargo boat had on board three hundred bags of linseed, each bag containing two maunds. The usual practice in thefts of this kind is to empty the bags into the *dinghee* and refill them by extracting a small quantity from each of the remaining bags on board the cargo boat. The *manjee* in this way has his full complement of bags to deliver on board ship, and the receivers run no risk in conveying away the stolen property, as it is not in bags, it cannot be identified. But in my case I had no intention of conveying away the booty. When my plans were completed I gave notice to the *darogah* where and when the transaction would take place. He made his arrangements accordingly. At a given signal, just as the twenty bags of linseed had been discharged into my *dinghee*, the police boat, with a dozen of constables on board, pulled alongside. The crew of the cargo boat and the crew of the *dinghee*, fourteen all told, were made prisoners. I, of course, was allowed to escape. But the former having been caught red-handed, freely admitted, what they could not deny, the receipt and delivery of the twenty bage of linseed. There was the seed in the *dinghee*, the empty

bags on the deck of the cargo boat and a deficiency in the hold corresponding to the number of empty bags. The case was complete without any further trouble or enquiry on the part of the police. The following day the prisoners were all placed before the magistrate, convicted on the clearest evidence, and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. The *darogah* received a handsome reward from the shippers, one of the largest exporting firms in Calcutta, who suffer to the tune of a lakh and a half of rupees annually, by thefts of this kind, for his smartness and detective ability. Of course part of the reward had to be given to the constables, but the *darogah's hissa*, the lion's share, fell to my lot. In addition to this the *darogah* shortly afterwards got his promotion through my exertions, and paid me the sum agreed upon. Having thus obtained a firm footing in the police I next set about carrying out the object nearest my heart—setting a trap for my persecutors. This is how I hoist them on their own petard. The little transaction between the *darogah* and I had placed me in the possession of funds. I therefore determined to work my way into caste again by giving my old associates a “big blow out” according to the custom of the country, and make a declaration that I would conform to the rules of the particular branch of the profession to which I had avowed allegiance for the future. Accordingly I got together all the noted burglars in Calcutta, feasted them to their hearts' content and made the necessary vow of conformity. There was great rejoicing at the supposed return of the prodigal. My next move was to plan a big enterprise and invite all my associates to join in it and then betray them to the police. The project was no less than a bank robbery. An entrance to the treasure vault was effected from the street



drain, by boring under the foundation of the building. The cover was so good that we were able to carry on the work during the day without being observed. When the passage was all but complete a night was fixed upon to enter the vault and carry off the treasure. I made my arrangements accordingly. An inspector with half a dozen of constables were secreted in the strong room, as it was called, because the door was made of iron and was secured with enormous locks and bolts. But burglars who know their business never attempt to enter buildings by the ordinary doorways. Most people are in the habit of entirely overlooking this fact. A sergeant with another half dozen of constables were posted in a house on the opposite side of the street, and the two parties at a given signal were to act in concert in capturing the thieves. The party on the outside would prevent escapes, while the party in the strong room would secure the burglars as they emerged from the hole in the floor. The plan was successful. Every man jack was captured.

The case brought me prominently to notice. Hitherto I had only ventured to work with the native officers of the police. But now the European inspectors and superintendents employed me. I had to be more careful, though, in working up my cases, or I might come to grief myself. I knew the European police would not support me in any illegal act, so I was forced to be *khabardaree*.

My next employment, after the bank business, was in a gambling case. A Mahomedan and a Chinaman had for a number of years, in co-partnership, run a gambling hell with extraordinary success. Every art and ingenuity known to the police were tried in vain to suppress the nuisance. The house was frequently surprised by a large body of police. But on effecting an entry no

evidence of gaming could ever be discovered, though the place was searched from floor to ceiling, and the persons of everyone found on the premises carefully examined. All that the police had ever witnessed on bursting into the room where the gambling was carried on, was a circle of men of different nationalities seated on a piece of carpet spread out on the floor devoutly listening to an old and venerable looking Mahomedan, with a long white beard, reading and expounding the Alcoran! The police at last baffled in their efforts to bring the keepers of the supposed gambling hell to justice, gave up the matter in despair. So the place continued to flourish unmolested until a servant of Sir Ashley Eden's got fleeced one evening to the tune of a couple of hundred rupees belonging to his master. The victim, it appeared, had been sent to Jaun Bazar Street to pay for straw, hay, and gram supplied to his master's horse during the month. He was met on the road by a *dalall* in the pay of the gaming house, and induced by this man to try his luck at cards. The unfortunate servant in a weak moment yielded, with the usual result. He left the hell without a single pice of the money he had taken there. When the discovery had been made that the tradespeople's bills had not been paid the servant was called upon for an explanation. He candidly confessed how the money went. His master took him straight to Sir Stuart Hogg, the then Commissioner of Police, for the purpose of having his statement verified. It turned out to be only too true. It was then that peremptory orders were given that the gambling hell must be suppressed cost what it would. I was accordingly engaged by the superintendent in whose district the house was situated to find out how the game was played and what became of the instruments of gaming when the

house was surprised by the police. In accordance with these instructions I proceeded to the gambling hell and was introduced by one of the *dallals*. The following day I reported to the superintendent what I had seen and the class of people that frequented the place. I had lost some money which was made good to me, and directed to return the next night when a feint attempt would be made to surprise the hell. In this conjuncture I was warned to keep my eyes about me and watch how the instruments of gaming disappeared. I carried out these instructions to the letter. Close upon midnight the scouts in the lanes leading to the place passed the word—*Ha dekho!* which was the signal that the police were coming. This watchword, I may tell you, is changed every night. Immediately the alarm was given there was a scramble for the money on the carpet. Every man picked up his own stake, while the owner of the house proceeded to conceal the gambling instruments in the back of his Alcoran. The book was bound with the cover of an old musical album and the space from which the musical instrument had been removed was used to conceal the evidence of gaming. The book was then placed on a reading stand in front of the moulvie, as he was called, and the whole scene was changed as if by magic! A nest of notorious gamblers was in an instant converted into a religious assembly, and the hell into a house of prayer! We were now ready to receive the police. But the surprise was only a feint, and the police turned off in another direction. So play was resumed.

The following day I reported progress to the superintendent; he was a cute “cuss,” that same superintendent. When I had related all I had seen in the gambling hell, he placed his two elbows on the desk and resting his chin



on his open palms thought for a moment. Then suddenly starting up he began to write rapidly; and when he had finished he said to me, "That will do, Haran, you may now go. I have heard all I want to know." "Won't you require me again, sir, on the night you propose to storm the garrison?" I enquired, not wishing to be left out of the sport, "my evidence may be necessary to prove that gambling was going on before the arrival of the police." "No," returned the superintendent, "your evidence will not be required. I intend to surprise the party in the very act." "That will be very difficult, sir," I ventured to suggest, "the scouts in the pay of the hell are both numerous and vigilant; and not only that, they are as true as steel to their employers." "I am prepared for all that" was the curt reply of the superintendent.

So I *salaamed* and took my leave. I was, nevertheless, curious enough to know how the superintendent would overcome the obstacles in the way of successful surprise of the gambling hell without having some person amongst the gamblers on whom reliance could be placed. I felt certain he could never pass the scouts in the neighbourhood unrecognised, and the house would be alarmed long before he could approach it. I therefore secretly, out of pure curiosity, set myself to watch the proceedings. This is what took place. About midnight I saw a funeral procession passing along Free School Street. Four men were carrying what appeared to me to be a corpse on a native *charpoy*. The body was covered with a white sheet. Eight men followed the corpse crying Hurry Bole! Hurry Bole! Hurry Bole! (the name of a Hindoo idol). The procession turned up Jaun Bazar Street in the direction of the gambling hell. The moment the house was

reached, down went the *charpoy* from the men's shoulders and up jumped the corpse, which was no other than the superintendent himself with a dozen of constables in undress! The door of the gambling hell was forced before you could say "Jack Robinson" and the whole nest of gamblers secured in the very act. They were so paralyzed with terror at the suddenness of the surprise that they could not make the slightest effort to conceal, or attempt to conceal the evidence of their crime. Even the Chinaman who was keeping watch on the roof of the building, when he saw the corpse start up from the *charpoy*, went off in a faint before he could sound the alarm.

Thus was one of the most successful gambling hells that had ever been known in Calcutta suppressed. The moulvie's Alcoran, which was produced in court, to show how the police were baffled on former occasions, caused no end of amusement.

It would make my story too long to relate all the adventures in which I had been engaged in the capacity of police informer. I will therefore conclude with an account of the case that brought me to grief.

A number of burglaries had been committed in the European part of the city. The police were at fault in tracing the delinquents. I was in consequence employed to try and get a clue to the perpetrators. While thus engaged, I received certain information from a discharged servant who had a grievance against his master. He put me on the track of some valuable property, easy of access, on the premises of his late employer. The temptation was too strong for me to resist. I entered the house one night after the family had retired to rest and bore off the booty. But a terrible Nemesis overtook me. The theft took

place in the jurisdiction of the superintendent who surprised the gambling hell in Jaun Bazar Street. When the case was reported, he came to the premises to make enquiries. A bloody foot-print was observed on each alternate step of the stairs leading to and from the room from which the property was stolen. The foot-print was incomplete, it was short of the impression of one toe, the one next the great toe of the right foot. "That is the foot-print" said the superintendent as soon as he saw it, "of that infernal informer." I had unfortunately cut my foot in getting over the compound wall, which was protected with glass, and this betrayed me. I was arrested and convicted of the theft, but succeeded in escaping from jail shortly afterwards. I had, of course, to flee from British territory to avoid recapture. And, after much wandering about, at last joined this honourable company of freebooters.





## CHAPTER XXIV.

---

### THE STORY OF AN OPIUM SMUGGLER.

WHEN Haran Dass, the police spy, had concluded his story, which was received with especial commendation, the chief commanded Shaik Salim, as next in order, to take his turn, and entertain the company with a taste of his quality as a professional smuggler. Shaik Salim, accordingly, began after this fashion.

I am a Mussulman by religion and an opium smuggler by profession. I commenced life as a cabin boy on board of one the steamers employed in the opium trade, on the run between Calcutta and China. As I was considered a smart, intelligent lad I was soon promoted to chief butler. It was in this capacity I carried on the trade of opium smuggling. I was drawn into the business in this way.

We had a Chinese cook on board, and during the time the steamer was laid up in Calcutta discharging and loading, he used to go on shore daily. On each occasion he took with him two empty hot water plates tied up in a jharun. These he always brought back in the same way but containing a meal of cooked curry and rice. On opium steamers the Custom House officers are very strict, especially with Chinamen, and the cook had in consequence to open his bundle and show what it contained every time he came on board. But the cook's bundle, to all appearance, never contained anything but the two plates, one inverted over the other, with curry and rice between them. This always went on for ten or fifteen days, during the period the steamer remained in port. No one ever suspected that anything wrong was going on, till one day, in the Bay of Bengal, the sea was running high and two of the hot-water plates in the pantry got broken. I only kept out six for the use of the captain and officers, and the remaining eighteen of the set were packed away in a box in the custody of the cook. Befere dinner hour I had to go to this box for two spare plates to replace the broken ones. Guess my surprise to find that the hollow space of each was filled with opium. The secret was out ; so the cook thought the best thing to do under the circumstances was to take me into partnership and share the profits between us. This I readily agreed to, and that is how I took to opium smuggling.

The opium was carried ashore at the other end of the pond, as it had been brought on board in Calcutta, in the hot-water plates. It was a mighty grand dodge, those hot-water plates ! The cook used to carry them right under the nose of the preventive officers, and the trick was never found out ! But now that there were two to

share the profits instead of one it was necessary to extend the business. So we consulted over the matter, the cook and I, and this is the conclusion we arrived at. There was a third party in the secret, a shoemaker in Bentinck Street on the Calcutta side, a very ingenious cove, who used to buy up contraband opium smuggled into the City from Native States. It was from this man the cook got his supplies. And this selfsame shoemaker was also the author of the hot-water plate dodge. So when the cook and I had decided upon increasing our smuggling speculation, the shoemaker was asked to invent some new scheme more suitable to business on an extended scale than the hot-water plates, which was a slow process. But our ingenious coadjutor had already anticipated us. He had thought out a plan, he said, which he believed would answer the purpose to a nicety. It was nothing more or less than a plain kerosine oil tin. But a tube of the same material two inches in diameter, extending from the aperture in the top to the bottom, had been ingeniously soldered in. This tube it was proposed to fill with *ghee* while all the surrounding space would contain opium. "You see," said the ingenious inventor, "when the Custom House officer screws off the top, which is directly over the tube and puts in his probe, he will find nothing but *ghee*, and as the probe will go straight to the bottom of the tin, he will never suspect that there is anything wrong. The invention excited our highest admiration. For while it was fifty times as efficacious, it was equally as secure against detection, as the hot-water plate dodge.

With this new invention, I would, in a very short space of time, have been able to retire a rich man. But my criminal associates, jealous of an outsider sharing the fruits of their own ingenuity, laid a trap to murder me when the vessel got to China. A woman was set on to decoy me to



a low disreputable quarter in Hong-Kong, where two villains were in hiding to assassinate me. But on the road to the place my "decoy duck" was attacked by a man armed with a murderous weapon, who would in all probability have taken her life had I not promptly jumped to her rescue, knocked the brute down and disarmed him. She had, it appears, been in the keeping of the monster, or rather she kept him until she was compelled, through ill-treatment, to run away from his protection. He was an habitual opium smoker and professional gambler, and this was the first time he had set eyes upon her since she left him. So the unfortunate woman, out of gratitude for what I had done for her, told me the diabolical plot that had been contrived to assassinate me! I was simply horrified at the revelation! But I kept my own council, and a sharp eye on my enemies. I knew it would not be safe for me to return to Calcutta in the same ship as the cook, so when the steamer was ready for sea I shammed sickness and remained behind. But a day or two afterwards I followed in another vessel determined to exact a terrible revenge. The moment I landed I went straight to the police hulk at Prinsep's Ghat and disclosed the whole system of opium smuggling carried on by the cook of the steamer I had just left. The information was given to the Inspector on condition that my name would not appear in the matter, and the officer kept his promise. A day or two before the steamer was ready for sea a watch was kept on the movements of the Chinaman. On the evening of the day before sailing, the crafty Celestial was arrested on a *dinghy* conveying four cases, containing eight tins of contraband opium on board the steamer on which he was employed as cook. The defendant swore the tins contained *ghee*. But the Inspector, who knew the secret, took the

prisoner and *ghee*, as he called it, straight to the lock-up, where the tins were opened and examined. Each tin was furnished with a tube from the opening in the top to the bottom of the tin filled with *ghee* while the surrounding space was packed with opium!

The arrest of the cook led to the apprehension of the whole gang engaged in the business on shore. I had therefore the satisfaction of seeing the entire nest of miscreants convicted. Having cleared my path of enemies, I returned to my old berth as ship's butler, but with the intention of continuing the smuggling business on my own account. I was now thrown upon my own resources, and had to invent for myself. The kerosine oil tin dodge had been exploded, so had the hot-water plate trick. For in a weak moment, when I was burning to be revenged on the perfidious Celestial, I let the cat out of the bag to the Police Inspector. So it would not be safe for me to resort to either.

After thinking the matter over for some time, it occurred to me that the pumpkin, used so plentifully on board for cooking purposes, might be converted into a receptacle for smuggling opium. And the more I thought over this matter, the more practical it seemed to me. I had often seen the shells of the pumpkin used as water vessels. Why, then, could it not be made to serve my purpose? I determined to make the experiment at all events. Accordingly, on my next stay in Calcutta, I went to a man in Chitpore Road whose profession it was to make musical instruments, water vessels for *jogees* and the like out of pumpkin shells. I told him exactly what I wanted, a seasoned shell well cleaned out with an aperture in the shank and not more than half an inch in diameter. The shank itself I wanted preserved. So, after giving the man the necessary instructions, and selecting a large size

pumpkin to be operated upon, I took my departure promising to call again in a day or two. The mistree asked for a small advance, by way of earnest money, which I gave him. When I called again at the shop I found, to my delight, the mistree had produced the very thing wanted to a nicety. I paid him his own price for the article, which rather astonished him, and took it home with me for a further experiment. I found it would contain five seers of opium, and the small aperture at the top was easily closed. It was a grand success, I now went back to the mistree and ordered five more. Six pumpkin shells would carry thirty seers of opium, and I thought this would be quite sufficient for me to begin with single handed; especially as there would be no division of profits, as was the case when working in partnership with the Chinamen.

The hollow pumpkin shells had, of course, a stale brown appearance, and in order to give them a look of freshness I had them touched over with a light green colouring. This made them appear exactly as if they had just come from the New Market. When the steamer was ready to sail I brought my pumpkins on board, with a couple of dozen real ones purchased in the bazar for cooking purposes during the voyage, in the most open, manner possible. I then tied them in pairs by their shanks and slung them over a spar which rested one end on the deck house and the other on the forecastle, exposed to all eyes on board. Indeed this was the safest place. Had I attempted to secrete them I would have excited suspicion at once. On arrival at Hong-Kong it was necessary to exercise a little strategy to get my pumpkins ashore. There was an order that nothing was to leave the steamer without a pass from the chief officer. So I went to the



captain and told him some of the pumpkins purchased in Calcutta had gone bad. But that they could be sold on shore for more than their original cost, for the sake of the shells, which the Chinese converted into many useful domestic utensils. So the captain said to me, "By all means dispose of them" and he directed the chief officer to pass them over the side, which was done!

The pumpkin dodge was a great success, and I took credit for being equally as ingenious and inventive as any of the crafty, cunning Celestials.

I had gone on steadily working my own patent for nearly five years, and amassing a considerable fortune, when a *contretemps* occurred on board which spoiled my little game. The steamer was loading in the port of Calcutta, and was almost on the point of sailing. I had got in the "bazar" for the voyage, had slung my pumpkins over the spar in their usual place, and put everything in my own department ship-shape and in order. Tiffin had just been served, and the remainder of the day, till dinner time, was my own. So I asked, and obtained, permission to go ashore for a few hours on my own account. The truth is, I wanted to see and say good-bye to my "girl" as we were off at day-light the following morning. During my absence one of the officers lost some English sovereigns. The police were sent for and a search was made on board, but without the desired result. The Inspector was apparently at his wits' end, and as a last resource conceived the idea that the missing sovereigns might be concealed in the pumpkins. One or two were consequently, cut open, and so was my "secret!"

The discovery of the smuggled opium created a great sensation on board. The Custom House officers wanted to claim the case, as the "find" was purely accidental on

the part of the police, and refused to allow the latter to take away the opium. This quarrel between the two contending parties was my salvation. Buxa, the *manjee* of the ship's *dingy* a great friend of mine, on hearing the disturbance on board went up to ascertain the cause, and when he heard that opium had been discovered in the pumpkins I had that day brought on board, and that the police were waiting my return, met me on the way and told me what had happened. I was horrified! I determined, however, not to fall into the hands of the Philistines, and after thanking my good angel for his timely warning, bolted for my life.

It is to this unfortunate circumstance, my friends, you are indebted for the honour, if it be one, of having a celebrated smuggler amongst you to-night. The smuggler rose amid deafening applause, and the band of outlaws retired to the land of dreams.

*N. B.—The above story may furnish the Collector of Sea Customs, Calcutta, with a few “tips.” It has often occurred to the writer that the revenue of the State would benefit more, were a trained expert in the art of detection employed to look after smuggling, than it does by the hated income-tax.*

*The author is not yet done with smuggling. He has a few revelations to make in other departments!*

---

## CHAPTER XXV.

---

### THE STORY OF AN ASPIRANT TO A THRONE !

THE opium smuggler having finished his interesting narrative amidst much cheering and clapping of hands, the chief called upon Teepoo for the next story. This is how he began.

My name is Teepoo, son of Kurrim Shaikh, late of Sherepore. My father was a religious fanatic, some people said he was mad, but there was method in his madness. Our neighbours were the uncivilised Garos. These simple children of nature are extremely credulous and easily twisted into any religious belief. My father therefore conceived the idea of appearing among them as a religious reformer and the founder of a new sect. He was not long in collecting a large following. The new



doctrine which he proclaimed suited the Garos to a nicety. It consisted of a compromise between their own idea of an invisible being called the "great spirit" and deism pure and simple. The new dogma was therefore not difficult to inculcate amongst a simple and superstitious people like the Garos.

In addition to that of a religious reformer my father professed to be gifted with supernatural powers. He predicted future events by reading the stars; told fortunes from a broken egg; cast out evil spirits with the shin bone of a man; discovered witches by placing a little salt on their heads; and performed many other wonderful miracles. Indeed, without some knowledge of legerdemain a man may preach piety all his life and not gain a single convert. But only let him acquire the reputation of doing something out of the common and thousands will flock to his standard. How silly and stupid the English missionaries must be to neglect the cultivation of magic or the black art. See what Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatzky are doing in India and other places because they pretend to be able to work miracles. They are simply carrying all before them. I really believe that if the English army were not in the way, Russia might conquer India through Madame Blavatzky alone! The natives of all classes would certainly follow her as blindly as the French did the Maid of Orleans to death or glory.

But to return to my story. My father was regarded by the Garos as an incarnation of the "great spirit." He had even a large following in the plains, especially in Sherepore, where hundreds, nay thousands, flocked to his standard. His influence over the multitude was remarkable, and he promulgated his faith with great enthusiasm.

In the ordinary course of nature my father died full of

years and honour. Even after death his tomb was regarded as the resting place of a saint to which hundreds resorted daily for devotional purposes. My father's mantle fell to the lot of his only son Teepoo. That is your humble servant. I was not, however, content with my father's lot, but aspired to something higher. I consequently sounded my followers to see how far they were prepared to go to see their spiritual guide, their *badshah*. The result was encouraging. They were prepared, they said, to go through fire and water if I would only lead the way. But, unfortunately, my followers were actuated by other motives than that of religious zeal. If it came to a hand-to-hand struggle with constituted authority, they would fight if I promised to free them from the oppression and exactions of the zemindars whom they hated with the hatred of an Irish tenant. Rude and uncivilized as most of them were, they had sense enough to know that the authorities allowed them unlimited religious freedom without fighting for it. But if they wanted more civil liberty, it was necessary to risk life and limb to obtain the boon. This they were fully prepared to do on condition that I promised, with the change of *raj*, to introduce a change in the whole revenue system. In fact to abolish *mathot*, *khaurcha*, and *begári* and sweep the hated landlord class off the face of the earth. This result, I assured them, would follow in due course once I was securely established on the *gadi* as their *badshah*.

In order to give you some idea of the intensity of the hatred that exists between landlord and tenant, it will be necessary for me to make a short digression. I will illustrate my subject by an example or two from life. Gooroo Das Rai was a model landlord—a fair specimen of the average Bengal zemindar. He had strongly opposed

the extension of railways and irrigation works in his district. But, when he found that these great State projects had increased the value of land, he was the first landlord to enhance the rent of his tenants. "The ryots get twice as much now for the produce of the soil as they used to get before the introduction of railways, and that canal which the *Sircar* cut through the district has more than doubled the yield of every tenant's holding: why should they have all the profit? These words were addressed to the zemindar's *gomasta* who was inclined to oppose his master's proposal to enhance the rent of his ryots, the *gomasta* remonstrated thus: "True, the railway and the canal have made the tenants' holdings more profitable, but the *Sircar* on that account has not increased the land revenue. Your ryots have hitherto been very faithful to you and yours. Do you think they will continue to be so if you point the knife to their throats?" "Well," replied the zemindar, "the *Sircar* cannot enhance the revenue of my estate, it has been fixed by law under the permanent settlement, praises be to *Prajapati*. But the law gives me the right to do so to my tenants, and I will exercise my right. I am not going to purchase what you call my *ryots*' faithfulness by such a heavy sacrifice of rent as I am suffering at present."

The zemindar of course had his way; the rents were accordingly enhanced. But he reckoned without his host. The *ryots* refused to pay higher rates for their land. The zemindar was obliged to go into court. But here again he was defeated. He could get no one to come forward and testify to the service of the notices. "It is a matter of life and death to us," said the *ryots*, "and we must at all costs prevent any witnesses appearing against us."

After much difficulty, cajoling and bribing, the *talookdar*



was at last successful in getting some of the *ryots* to come forward and testify to the service of the usual notice in such cases, and the zemindar now thought himself on the high road to victory. But the day before the hearing of the suit the names of the traitors transpired and there was a general rising throughout the zemindaree. The landlord's house was burned to the ground. Then a hunt was made for the traitors in the camp. They were found. "Well," said the leaders of the opposition party, "you being Mahomedans are going to give evidence against Mahomedans in behalf of a vile Hindoo! Take that! and that!" and a shower of blows from *lathies* rained upon the unfortunate men until their bodies were beaten into a jelly! The *ryots* had now tasted blood and they became furious. Other zemindarees caught the contagion and the whole district was in commotion. It was as much as the civil authorities could do to quell the disturbance. Dave Carson says the only difference between an Irishman and an Indian cultivator is this: 'In Ireland paddy makes the riots, but in India the *ryots* make the paddy.' I am inclined to think there is even a closer resemblance than this between the children of the Emerald Isle and the Bengal *ryots*.

The collection of the *máthot* or *abwab* often leads to serious disturbances between the landlords and tenants, and if the Government were wise, all illegal exactions on the part of the zemindars should be put down with a strong hand.

Hunaman Singh, a tall up-country man in the service of a zemindar of Kanchanpore appeared one morning at the door of one of his master's tenants with a piece of paper in his hand. The tenant was seated smoking in the varandah of his hut. After the customary salutation,

the tenant enquired, "What is that, Hunaman Singh, you have got in your hand?" "That," replied the official, twisting his long moustaches "is an account of the *máthot* due by you to the zemindar, and which is being levied from every *ryot* on the estate to cover the expense of his son's approaching marriage."

"*Máthot*! dear me, how can I pay *máthot*, when I am actually in arrears of my rent and largely indebted to the money-lender on account of my father's obsequies and my own daughter's marriage."

"It is not much you have got to pay," pleaded Hunaman Singh; only two annas for every rupee of rent. The zemindar has very considerably reduced the *máthot* as this is a bad season. The *ryots* he says will scarcely recover an eight-anna crop."

"For that very reason" replied the tenant, "I am unable to pay anything. If you search my whole house you will not find five pice, let alone five rupees which you say is my share of the *máthot*."

"If that is the case" returned Hunaman Singh, "you must sell your brass pots, beg or borrow the money, for the zemindar must have the *máthot*. If one tenant is allowed to make excuses of this kind all the tenants will do the same. You must pay the *máthot*."

"Now, Hunaman Singh, you just go and tell the *talookdar* I am unable to pay at present. All my wife's ornaments are mortgaged to the *Kyar* and I have nothing in the house that I can turn into money."

"You just carry that message to the *talookdaree* yourself" returned Hunaman Singh. "And if you don't go willingly I have orders to take you by force."

Here the tenant made a clutch at a *doa* lying close by. Hunaman Singh attempted to frustrate his purpose and a

struggle ensued. The neighbours collected, rescued the *ryot* and beat the zemindar's *nagodi* into a jelly.

Where oppressions of this kind are of frequent occurrence is it any wonder the tenants should regard their zemindars with the bitterest hatred? The great enemy of mankind, the devil himself, could not invent a more wretched existence for humanity than that to which the unfortunate Bengal *ryots* are subjected. The British Government are doing something towards mitigating their misery. But it is only something. The last measure of reform—the Bengal Tenancy Act, an Act which was strenuously opposed by the zemindars, does not go far enough.

But to return to my story. The promise to free the *ryots* from the oppressions of their zemindars acted upon my followers like a spell. And the feeling even spread to villages and districts in which I had no religious adherents. All went well until the day fixed for a general rising. The authorities had treated the movement as they had done, and are doing, the National Congress, with contempt. The great lesson of the Indian Mutiny had been forgotten. So I depended upon this for the success of my plans. I was not far wrong after all, though I was obliged to yield in the end to the power and resources of the *Sircar*. But I gave the authorities a power of trouble for all that. The disturbance commenced by my following, seizing and maltreating the zemindars. Many of them were carried off to the hills. Then, and not till then, did the Magistrate of the district rise to the occasion. "What!" said he in alarm "have the *paguls*"—for as such the men who first joined the movement were nicknamed—"turned traitors?"

"Yes" replied his deputy, "but theirs is madness, with



a method in it. I always suspected they had some ulterior object in view, but was afraid to speak out in case I only got laughed at for my pains, so I kept quiet and watched the progress of events. The *paguls* as you call them, are preaching a strange religious doctrine, the text of which appears to be this, that the British Raj is about to expire and their leader, Teepoo Fakir, has been chosen by God as the people's future King,\* and his followers are going about the district in armed bands exciting the *ryots* to rebellion."

"We must lose no time then," returned the Collector, "in bringing Teepoo and his followers to reason. I never for a moment suspected they could become so turbulent and troublesome. Hitherto I had regarded Teepoo and his adherents as religious fanatics—nothing more nor less—or I might have nipped the rebellion in the bud instead of allowing the cancer to come to a head. Nothing now will do but the surgeon's lancet."

The magistrate was forced to report the matter to Government and ask for military assistance to stamp out the rebellion. The result was a number of my followers were killed, others fled to the hills, and a number were taken prisoners, myself amongst the rest and the district was restored to tranquillity.

"Now, Teepoo," said the magistrate to me when I was lodged in *hajat*, "what pitiful game is this you have started?"

"What do you mean, sir?" returned I, "I do not understand what you are driving at."

"Oh you don't; don't you!" continued the magistrate.

"No, sir," replied I.

"Well my man," went on the magistrate, "you are

\* Fact.

charged with treason and rebellion. What have you got to say to that?"

"Not guilty," said I. "I am the inheritor of a *Flakir's Durgah*, the same which my father possessed before me. The people who visit me came to offer *srini* as to a saint. I confess that there have been some large gatherings lately, but the people had only come to obtain my blessing."

"Had they no other object in view?" continued the magistrate, "Did they not want to proclaim you as their *badshah* and overturn the Company's *raj*?"

"Certainly not, sir" was my prompt response. "Had they contemplated any such wicked intentions they would not have received my blessing."

"Then how do you account for the rough treatment the zemindars have received at the hands of your following?" queried the magistrate.

"I am quite unable to account for that, sir. Doubtless the zemindars and their *ryots* had differences of their own to settle. I know nothing about these secular matters."

"But you have yourself been seen roving about the district with armed men, what did you mean by this?"

"Oh, sir, I cannot prevent men from following me about wherever I go. Am I not their spiritual leader? And owing to the disturbed state of the district I own some of my followers did carry with them swords and firearms for their own protection, but I had no hand in arming them, and I believe they were not armed with any criminal intent."

"Do you mean to say that you never encouraged your followers to rise against constituted authority?"

"No, never!" replied I with decision.

Here the magistrate left me with the remark that I was a tough customer to deal with.

About a week afterwards I was brought to trial on a charge of "High Treason." The case for the prosecution, however, completely broke down and the charge was then altered to one of "disturbing the public peace and seditious practices." On this accusation I was found guilty, convicted and sentenced to undergo five years' rigorous imprisonment. I had been in jail about six months only when a great fire broke out in the labour sheds. The conflagration occurred at midnight, and the prisoners were let out of their cells to carry water for the purpose of extinguishing the flames. My heart jumped to my mouth the moment I saw the state of affairs. Everything was in the wildest confusion. Warders running here and there in search of buckets and earthen vessels to carry water, no one to look after the prisoners. "Here is a chance," I said to myself, "which may never occur again during the whole term of my imprisonment. If I fail to take advantage of it I deserve to die in confinement." So suiting the action to the thought I made my way to a dark corner of the jail compound, placed a bamboo against the wall, which I mounted with the agility of a squirrel, and was soon in the promised land of freedom. Of course I deemed it prudent to clear out of British territory as speedily as possible. It is to these circumstances, my friends, you are indebted for the honour of having amongst you to-night a man who made a bold stroke, but failed, to become a *badshah*.

---



## CHAPTER XXVI.

---

### THE HISTORY OF A REMARKABLE MURDER!

WHEN Teepoo, the "Aspirant to a Throne," had concluded his very entertaining narrative, for which he was greatly applauded, the chief called upon Kurrim Biswas for the next story, who thus began:

My name is Kurrim Biswas, son of a retired merchant and trader in good circumstances. I had been brought up and educated in Calcutta. But as my father was a man of independent means I was not trained to any profession. When, therefore, I grew up to man's estate I had nothing to do but follow the bent of my own inclinations, and very vicious inclinations, I must own, they were to follow. But I gave way to them all the same. My greatest failing, a failing, which amounted to a passion, and an un-

conquerable passion too, was a love of the fair sex. I was always the victim of some charming enslaver. And as my *enamorata*, by some strange fatality, was invariably the property of somebody else, I was consequently in continual hot water! I might have actually come to grief on many occasions, but I was 'cute enough to stand well with the police, and they kept me out of many a scrape. The first thing I did, wherever I made a new conquest, was to find out the *chowkeydar* of the beat and make him a handsome present. In return he would keep me informed when the course to my "lady's bower" was free from danger; and acted as my guardian angel when we were together. But with all these precautions I was often surprised by the sudden and unexpected appearance of some one or other of the male relations of my charmer. It is always in this way "love unlawful" is found out. I will relate one amusing episode of this kind, from which you will be able to judge how dangerous it is to poach on other men's preserves. The poacher, I can tell you, has many hair-breadth escapes, and I was no exception to the rule. I had been "paying my respects" to a charming young woman—clandestinely of course—residing in Dhurumtollah Street. Her husband was a medical practitioner, and while he was out, attending on his patients, I was in his place cheering the lonely hours of his better half. On one of these occasions he returned sooner than was expected. I was just leaving the house as he entered it. I saw that I was recognised and made tracks by a back door as fast as my legs could carry me. The man of drugs followed crying *chore! chore!* (thief! thief!) at the top of his voice. The well-known sound brought the *chowkeydar* of the beat upon the scene. It proved to be my own "guardian angel." He too recognised me, and pretend-

ing to look in every direction for the fleeing thief but the right one, enquires "Where? where?" "There! there!" exclaimed the frantic husband, pointing after me. But the *chowkeydar* ran in an opposite direction and seized an innocent man! By this time, of course, I had disappeared, and I knew the matter would go no further for fear of scandal. It was a lucky escape for me at all events, as I afterwards discovered. For the man of pills and potions, burning with jealousy and foaming for revenge, had worked up a nice little plot to run me in on a charge of theft. He had taken off the Cashmere shawl which he wore and throwing it after me, told the policeman that I had dropped it while running away. But in order to substantiate the charge, it would have been necessary to have had me arrested and recognised at the time. In this the doctor was completely baffled by the *wily chowkeydar*. So he returned home disappointed, but determined to inflict a terrible revenge on the partner of his joys and sorrows. The following morning the news went forth that the doctor's wife had died of cholera during the night and that her body had been borne off to the burning ghat before sunrise. She had paid the penalty, poor thing, for her share in the intrigue! The news shot like an ice bolt through my heart, and I vowed to revenge her death or die in the attempt. I knew there would be no use reporting the matter to the police. The body had already been cremated and all evidence of crime completely obliterated.

X To invoke the aid of the law under such circumstances would, to a dead certainty, result in failure: and not only that, it would tie my hands in regard to any action I might afterwards be induced to take to avenge the death of the woman who had risked and lost her life on my account. If after coming forward and publicly accusing her



murderer, or the man I believed to be her murderer, and he were to escape for want of evidence, and was afterwards found with his throat cut, suspicion would point to me as sure as fate. So I resolved to be *chup*. I could then be his accuser, judge, jury and executioner all in one, without running much risk of discovery. To this end I bent all my energies, craft, and skill—and I was no mean proficient in the art of invention.

After thinking the matter over for some days, and dreaming about it for as many nights ; for I could think and invent as well in my sleep as in my waking moments, I, at last, resolved upon the adoption of the following plan to inveigle my victim to his fate. But I will pass on from what I resolved to do, to what I actually did. I engaged a small isolated house in the suburbs of the city enclosed by a compound wall with a deep but narrow well in the centre. After taking possession I had the hair of my head, eyebrows, and moustache shaved off and pretended to be very ill ; too ill in fact to get out of bed. I gave out that I was a Brahmin and had come from a long distance to seek medical aid in Calcutta ; and that I had been told of a certain physician who was considered a specialist in my case. I, accordingly, sent for this man. He came, prescribed for me, but failed to recognise his patient. One night I pretended to be worse than usual, and requested the doctor to sleep in the house in case I should require his aid before morning. He consented. That was his last sleep on earth ! I got up in the middle of the night, crept stealthily into his room, he was snoring heavily at the time, and stabbed him to the heart ! He died without a groan, I then flung his vile carcass down the well in the compound ; and destroyed all traces of the crime,

by burning the bed clothes, which were saturated with blood.

The following day I sent for the landlord of the house and told him, still pretending to be very ill and weak, that I had a dream during the night to the effect that if the well in the compound was filled up, an *asvatha* tree planted over the spot and an image of the god *Panchanana*—literally, five-faced, a form of the all-destroying Siva,—set up under its branches, I should get well instantly, otherwise I would surely die. I offered to pay all the expenses together with that of sinking a new well if the landlord, who was also an orthodox Brahmin, would assist me to carry out the will of the gods! I hinted, at the same time, something about the awful consequences of incurring a Brahmin's dying curse, if my purposes were thwarted! This had the desired effect. The well was filled in, the sacred *asvatha* tree planted over the spot and the image of that most hideous in appearance of all the gods in the Hindoo pantheon—*Panchanana*—was set up under its branches. My mind was now at ease. I knew that no one, not even the most suspicious of mankind, would ever suspect that a Brahmin would resort to such means to conceal crime! If he did so, he might expect to be instantly turned into an unclean beast or smitten with a loathsome disease. For among the three hundred and thirty million of Hindoo deities of both genders, there is none which is more dreaded than this five-faced and fifteen-eyed monster! But with all his malignant attributes, like the Satan of the Christians, he is not without his good points. He has been known to make barren women fruitful! and on that account is the most devoutly worshipped, especially by Hindoo women denied the blessings of offspring, of all the gods.

My recovery after this event was, of course, rapid. But before I had taken my departure from the scene of the murder the doctor was missed. The police had been round all his patients to make enquiries, myself amongst the rest, my story was very simple. The missing man had visited me for the last time on the evening of his disappearance. His stay was short, and by way of apologising for his abrupt departure, he mentioned that he had a serious and important case, which required immediate attention, at the other end of the town. So after prescribing for me he hurried away, promising to call again the following day. I had not seen him since. This account seemed to satisfy the human sleuth hounds, and I was not troubled with any further questioning on the subject. Who, not even old Nick himself, would suspect a feeble, bed-ridden patient, of putting his doctor, a hale, hearty man in the prime of life, out of the way! Such an idea is too ridiculous to even think of!

A day or two after my interview with the police, I settled up with my landlord and bid him goodbye, with a Brahmin's blessing. I hinted that he had done more to hasten my recovery than the leech who had so mysteriously disappeared, and whose nostrums only sickened instead of curing me. To this the good old man remarked, "Your recovery is due to the benign influence of a spiritual physician, who, pleased with your recent act of piety, has spirited away the quack doctor whose nostrums would have poisoned you! The gods have shown you much favour. You are a Brahmin of the Brahmins! *Salam! Salam!*" So we parted.

I returned to my home and cast off the hated disguise I had assumed in order to carry out my dread purpose of revenge. I had been successful so far, my hated




enemy and rival had expiated his crime; and I felt absolutely secure of detection. Still I was not happy! My rest at night was disturbed by dreadful dreams. I grew nervous and melancholy, and would start at the merest shadow. My heart would jump to my mouth at the sight of a policeman. I could not bear to see a fowl killed and would almost faint at the sight of blood! I often felt a strong impulse, amounting at times to an irresistible power, urging me to go to the thana and confess my crime. But the moment I saw a *chowkeydar*, fear got the better of my inclinations and I slunk back again in terror and dismay, looking round every now and then, lest a human sleuth hound was dogging my steps! Existence to me was becoming intolerable. And, to make matters worse, the search after the missing doctor, which the local police had given up in despair, was taken in hand and prosecuted with more intelligence, vigour and determination by the Detective Department. The Superintendent, who was a 'cute "cuss," full of observation and the art of turning it to good account, had not been long on the case before he got hold of the palanquin bearers who had carried the doctor to the house of the sick Brahmin on the evening prior to his disappearance. These wily Ooriahs informed the police that they had been told by their "fare" to call for him again at daylight the next day; and in pursuance of their instructions they accordingly did call, but were told by the sick Brahmin that the doctor had gone away during the night to attend upon another patient. Who was this sick Brahmin? was the knotty question the police next undertook to unravel. The landlord of the house where he had put up was sent for and questioned on the subject. But all that he could say about the individual wanted was, that he had been his tenant for a short time,

and proved a good tenant too, for although he only occupied the house for ten or twelve days he paid rent for an entire quarter. "Oh! he did; did he?" exclaimed the Detective Superintendent in surprise. Then drawing out his pocket book, he said, "I'll just make a note of that, it's so out of the common in the Hindoo character." The landlord continued, "But my tenant was a Brahmin and a very holy man." "No doubt of it" returned the police officer with a roguish twinkle of the eye, which indicated as clearly as human language could express it, that he "didn't believe a word of it." "But, sir," pleaded the landlord, "I have the most positive evidence of the fact." He then took the officer to where the *asvatha* tree had been planted, and the idol set up under its branches, at the request, and at the expense, of the holy Brahmin. "And what was here," enquired the Superintendent, "before the planting of the *asvatha* tree?" "An old unused well, which I often thought would some day prove a man trap," (he wasn't aware then it had already been turned into a man trap!) "and on that account was glad to have it filled up," was the landlord's reply. "And who paid the expense of filling it up?" was the Superintendent's next question. "The holy Brahmin" returned the landlord.


He then related to the police officer the Brahmin's dream and the action which had been taken in consequence. A new light seemed to dawn upon the Superintendent. and he enquired of the landlord if the well had been filled up before or after the disappearance of the doctor. "Let me think," said the landlord, "yes, it was the day after the police had come to the sick man to enquire when he had been last visited by the doctor." This confirmed the dawning suspicions that had begun to take shape in the mind of the detective. So the officer told the landlord

that the well would have to be cleared out again. The pious Hindoo looked horrified! "Desecration!" he exclaimed at once, "desecration! I cannot permit it! My religion will not permit it!" But the detective officer was not to be deterred by the religious scruples of the pious Hindoo where the majesty of the law was to be vindicated, and the work of "desecration" commenced at once, in spite of strenuous opposition. The result was, my "secret" had been brought to light. The missing doctor had been accounted for. But his murderer was still unknown and at large. The "holy Brahmin" had to be traced.

 "No easy task this," I often said to myself, "for the human sleuth hounds." And, indeed, the secret might have died with me had I been sufficiently discreet. But fear blinded my judgment, and I was the first to give the police a clue to the man they were in quest of. This is what I did. With a view to turning the attention of the police on a wrong scent, I addressed an anonymous letter to the Superintendent, stating that the doctor's murderer was a native of Benares and the custodian of a Hindoo temple in the holy city. That the doctor and his wife had once made a pilgrimage to Benares, and while staying there a priest of one of the numerous temples had fallen in love with the latter. The husband on discovering the intrigue returned at once with his erring spouse to Calcutta. But the memory of her unfaithfulness continued to rankle in his mind, till at last driven to desperation by jealousy he quietly put her out of the way. The knowledge of her fate came to the ears of the priest, who, suspecting foul play, came to Calcutta, under the pretence of being sick and requiring medical aid, to revenge her death. He engaged a house in the suburbs, called in the



man he intended to murder to attend upon him and when an opportunity served, carried through his purpose, concealing the body in a well in the compound of the premises. Having thus accomplished his mission he returned to Benares. A good deal of this letter was true. The doctor and his wife had been to Benares and he left the holy city sooner than he otherwise would have done, because he thought his better half had been too constant and frequent in her attendance at a certain temple on the banks of the river which was served by a handsome priest. This secret I learned from the woman herself. But my letter had not the desired effect. Instead of misleading the police it brought them a step nearer the object of their search. I had used the Sanskrit character and endeavoured to express myself as a Hindoo. But in this I was not wholly successful. There were some expressions which betrayed the fact that the writer of the anonymous letter was a Mahomedan and not a Hindoo. In this opinion Major Lees, the great Oriental scholar, who was consulted, concurred. So the police instead of going to Benares to look for the doctor's murderer, got hold of the examination papers of the various schools and colleges in Bengal, Behar and Orissa, and set to work comparing the composition and mode of expression of the anonymous letter with the school exercises of boys for several years back. The moment this information was brought to me, for I had a private detective of my own watching every movement in the case, taken by the police, I thought it time to "skedaddle," and it was well I did so, for the police the day after my disappearance were making enquiries after me. They had found what they wanted, but the bird had taken wing in the meantime and left them in the lurch. I thought it best for my safety to leave



British territory ; and after much wandering about fell in with this honourable band of dacoits in whose company I have enjoyed comparative peace of mind ever since. Having no cause now to conceal my crime from any of you, I have as easy a conscience as the great Roman Pontiff himself.

“Bravo! Hurra!” from the whole strength of the company.

---

CHAPTER XXVII.

---

## THE STORY OF A PROFESSIONAL COINER.

WHEN the “man of blood,” as the doctor’s murderer was jocosely called amongst the outlaws, had made an end of his entertaining, though somewhat ghastly, narrative, the chief called upon the “coiner” for the next story, who thus began:—

I am known amongst my friends and acquaintances as the “Mistree,” but amongst my enemies—the police—as the “professional coiner.” I commenced life in a very humble position in the Calcutta Mint. But I was sharp, active, and attentive to my work, and the *sahib* rewarded my industry by rapid promotion. I was raised from a “jack” on rupees five per month to a “mistree” on rupees fifteen before I had completed my fifth year of ser-



vice. I was now in a position of trust, had gained a good name, in a short time, for sobriety, industry and honesty, and I resolved, to make a fortune by it. I was a bit of a philosopher too, in a quiet way, be it observed, that is, I never attempted to make a parade of my philosophy or trumpeted it forth to the world, as some men do, but kept it quietly to myself. I reasoned in this way. My experience of the world teaches me that there are men with good names and men with bad names, and men who take up a middle position, whose names are neither good nor bad enough to be noticed. These are the most luckless dogs in existence, they are not good enough to be admired or bad enough to excite sympathy, so they have to bear the inconvenience of society's mistrust! Take for example a man who has made a slight slip in common honesty; the fact will turn up against him again and again, and his whole future career will be thoroughly damaged. He is not guilty enough to become an object of interest. He is not sufficiently innocent to avoid suspicion. Prudent people avoid him; philanthropists find him not worth powder and shot. But let him stand forth a determined villain, and he will be surrounded by hundreds of benevolent people anxious to reclaim him. It may be that he has subjected himself to the penalties of the law, but even these will fall lightly upon him in the end if he only consents to become a deserving bad character! At the present moment hundreds of small offenders are undergoing their terms of imprisonment without any hope of mitigation; but only the other day the sympathy of all India was roused to fever heat for the greatest scoundrel and criminal in the land, Tantia Bhil!\*

\* The following is an extract from a Calcutta journal *re* the notorious outlaw!

If an exceedingly bad name may be turned to such good account, a good name, you may be sure, may be turned to a better. But it is one thing to deserve a good name, and another thing to get it. To be practically useful, your merits must be trumpeted forth, advertised, paraded and puffed, like a quack medicine, or a new soap. A great deal of this may be done—and with some success—without justification for the trumpeting, advertising, parading, and puffing process—upon false pretences, in fact. But, however acquired, a good name may be made a mine of wealth. To say nothing of profits and honours, it brings privileges; and one of the most useful privileges of a good name is that its owner may deserve a bad one with a very good chance of not being found out. It is by persons of good character, or supposed good character, that most great crimes have been committed, and most of the mischief done in the world. They have opportunities, denied to their less reputable brethren, who are soon discovered and pulled up short in their career.

I knew a man of my acquaintance who had the reputation of being a fool. Now he happened to be one of the most sensible men I had ever met with. But few people had the sagacity to discover wherein his strength lay.

Tantia, the great Bhil outlaw—the modern Jack Sheppard—the hero of a thousand dacoities, whose exploits in the Central Provinces are known far and wide, has been photographed. The face is hardly an attractive one, but a certain look of earnestness beneath the rugged brow reveals something of that true touch of humanity—the sympathy, the compassion to feel for, and befriend the weak who are despoiled by the strong, against whom he was always in arms, that has made the name of Tantia revered amongst the dumb ryots of Central India, once the scene of his happy hunting grounds. Tantia's likeness is worth preserving: he is the hero of many a romance in real life.—*Statesman*, Sept. 21.

The consequence was that his cleverness in certain business transactions took people unawares, which gave him such an advantage over them that he had acquired a fortune before they found out their mistake!

Another man I had known was credited with being a most consummate liar. He did not gain the reputation for nothing, for he was one. I need scarcely mention the fact, that he was a native of Bengal. How that man used to lie was a caution! When he did speak the truth, which was very seldom, he did so with the same object that influences a fairly truthful man to resort to falsehood, to mistify and drive people out of their calculations. His very truth was falsehood emphasised. For he well knew his audience would believe to be true the very reverse of what he told them.

This is how I gained my good name for truth and honesty. My *sahib* took credit to himself for being a keen observer of human nature, at least Bengali human nature.

He believed the Bengalis to be a nation of liars, in this he was not far wrong, but he had yet to learn that their very truth was falsehood and their falsehood truth! This is the very acumen of the art of deception, and a very fine art it is too, too fine, in fact, for the sight of an average Englishman. See how the Congress-wallahs, who claim to be the representatives of the people, have fooled Mr. Hume with all his Indian experience! This should be a caution to the globe-trotters.

But I am digressing. Whenever a new hand was appointed to my department, and the *sahib* thought he detected a dash of roguishness in his countenance, I not only placed temptation in his way, but encouraged him to speculation; and then betrayed him! Wouldn't the *sahib* chuckle at his own sagacity when he saw the scorcher



fork-out the blank rupees! Technically speaking, a blank rupee means a coin that has just been cut out of the sheet of silver, and before it receives the impression, or as we say in the Mint, before it is "struck." After undergoing the latter operation peculation is impossible. "Yes," he would say, turning to me, "I told you that fellow was a thief. I knew it by his looks." To which I would exclaim, "*Sabash! Sabash! Saresvati-ka-beta hazur!*" (literally—Well done! Well done! Your honour is the son [incarnation] of the Goddess of Wisdom!) "Yield to a man's fads and he will yield to your interests" was always a favourite maxim of mine. Whenever the *sahib* asked my opinion about any person or thing, I always contrived to find out what master thought himself and fashioned my reply accordingly. I had my reward. The *sahib* would often say to me after I had brought a comrade to grief for peculation, "Jack," (he always called me by the familiar name of Jack) "I am never mistaken in my man, I was never deceived in you, I could read truth and honesty in that brown face of yours from the first day I set eyes on you." I acknowledged the compliment by joining my hands, bowing low and replying "*Hazur.*" I really believe that if the entire Mint had been "gutted" I would have been the last person to be suspected. It was the old game of deception which the sepoys practised on their officers in 1857, being played over again. The latter refused to believe in the disloyalty of their men even when their children, as they familiarly called them, were levelling the guns at their heads! Now it so happened, just at this time, when the *sahib* was so loud in his praises of my integrity, I had invented a grand scheme for robbing the Mint. In fact, it was then in full operation. My accomplice in the crime was a large *cheel* (*hawk!*) Yes,

you may laugh, but its a fact all the same. This is how the trick was done. Just outside the Mint compound there was a large jack tree, and in that tree sat a hawk waiting patiently for the balance of my dinner; and at the foot of that tree squatted a woman selling *pân*; that woman was my wife. Now between the three of us we did a roaring business. My dinner over, I threw the balance usually a dressed pigeon stuffed with blank rupees—to the hawk. The intelligent bird picked it up, carried it to the tree aforesaid and stripped it to the bone. Then the tree began to rain rupees; my wife picked them up and shut up her shop for the day at the same time. And well she might for she had made a good day's wages! Every day for months that hawk was ~~found~~ sound at his post at the same hour on the look-out for the balance of my dinner. My wife with her *pân* stall was very much *en evidence* at the same place about the same hour, equally anxious about the remnants of the hawk's repast. I was on the high road to fortune. But a change came over the spirit of my dream. My intelligent bird like our friend and brother the Baboo, on the strength of his subsistence allowance, took unto himself a wife and begat sons and daughters. This act of indiscretion brought us both to grief. The hawk not only lost his subsistence allowance, but his life, and I lost my post. It occurred in this wise. The hawk instead of going to his usual perch in the jack tree to enjoy his dinner carried it off to share with his wife and family. On the road one or two other hawks attempted to dispute his possession, and in the scrimmage that took place in mid air the bone of contention fell into a gentleman's compound. The fall scattered the rupees about, and the native servants in superstitious terror ran to their master to say it was raining silver pieces. The

gentleman came to the spot, picked up the coins and sent them to the police office, with an account of their strange advent. The Superintendent, who had frequent cases of speculation at the Mint to enquire into, knew at once from whence the silver pieces had come. So the first thing he did was to interview the Mint Master. The coins were recognised all the more readily because they were "blanks." Had they been "struck," of course recognition would have been out of the question. But they were only half manufactured rupees, and could not have been obtained anywhere else but at the Mint. The question now was, how did they get out of the premises? Every individual employed in the department where speculation was possible, was minutely searched under the supervision of a European warder, before he left the Mint precincts of an evening. The solution of the problem was surrounded with much doubt and difficulty. One suggested one thing, another something else, but all wide of the mark. At last it was decided to keep a watch on the Mint premises from the outside. The Mint Master had heard, he said, of a case in England where an employé had filled the body of a dead rat with sovereigns and lifting it up by the tail flung it over the Mint wall to an accomplice on the other side. This was the nearest guess that had yet been made to account for the manner in which the blank rupees had found their way out of the Mint. The real secret had never been suspected for a moment. While all this enquiry had been going on I was engaged searching the neighbourhood for my truant bird. I found him with his mate and a brood of youngsters in a tree in Tank Square. To this tree I shifted my wife with her *pân* stall. It was useless, however, for the very next day the hawk was shot by the Police Superintendent as it was rising from the



Mint compound with the body of a pigeon, stuffed with silver pieces, in its talons. I heard the report of the gun, ran to the window and saw my bird fall. The police officer and my *sahib* were making for the spot. My heart jumped to my mouth. I could see it was all up with me now, the cat was out of the bag, and I was out of the Mint in a jiffy. I knew I would be the first suspected as none of the other workmen had the same opportunity to pilfer that I had. I was right in my surmises, for the moment the *sahib* and the police officer returned to the Mint one of the warders was told to go and call "Jack." "Jack," replied the official, "has just left saying he had got an attack of cholera, or something of that kind, and he looked the picture of a corpse." "Sold by heavens!" exclaimed the police officer, and then there was a rush for my house. But this child was too old a bird to be caught with chaff. The police, however, searched my domicile and found further evidence of my guilt in the shape of "blank" rupees. My *sahib* after this gave up reading native character. He declared, by his God, he would never trust a black man again.

I was now thrown completely on my own resources for a living. My first care, of course, was for my personal safety. I knew there would be within a few hours of my disappearance a warrant out for my arrest, I had, therefore, not much time to form any plans for the future, but I had lately noticed that nearly all the Bengali Baboos out of place were drifting towards Assam, and I thought I would go with the stream. So to Assam I went. Having got there my next thought was, "What shall I do for a living? There is no mint in which I might seek employment—so I must turn my attention to something else." While musing over my distressful circumstances

in this way a happy thought struck me. It was this. I had gained a fair technical knowledge of how genuine rupees were produced, why not turn this knowledge to account and go in for manufacturing counterfeits? The infant thought was scarcely twenty-four hours old before it was put into practice. By way of revenge I started an opposition business to the Calcutta Mint. The venture proved a grand success. I turned out rupees from a white metal, a composition of my own invention, that the ignorant villagers were unable to distinguish from the genuine article. Just at this time I happened to foregather with a gang of strolling gipsies. We fraternized at once. They were just the tools I wanted to push my new coins into circulation. This is how they did the trick. During our progress through the province, the gang would file off in pairs to the different villages *en route*. On arriving in front of a cottage they would ask for a handful of rice. This was scarcely ever refused. Before leaving, however, one of the pair would produce seventeen or eighteen annas in pice and ask a rupee for it. The villager, of course, would jump at the offer. When the rupee was produced the gipsy would examine it critically to see that it was all right. But not satisfied with his own judgment the coin was passed on to his accomplice for an expression of his opinion. The second Gipsy, after turning the rupee over and over a few times, would put it into his mouth, take it out again, wipe it dry and submit it to a further and final inspection. Then with a negative shake of the head, the gipsy would say: "No, this is not the kind of rupee that passes in my country! Its another kind of rupee!" and the gipsy tries to explain to the villager the sort of rupee he requires. The dupe of course goes in and brings out another rupee which is put through

the same tests as the first with exactly the same result. This goes on till the patience or the little store of rupees of the villager is exhausted. And the gipsies gather up their pice and depart for fresh fields and pastures green! They leave their unfortunate dupe to find out the way he can that all his genuine rupees have been exchanged for counterfeits! The exchange takes place when the gipsy puts the rupee into his mouth. A spurious one is taken out in its place.

My general practice was to clear out of a district where I had put a large amount of spurious money into circulation before any of it had time to find its way into the Government treasury. On one occasion I neglected this wise precaution and was very nearly coming to grief in consequence. I had scarcely left the head-quarters of a district when bad money began to come into the treasury. The Deputy Commissioner was informed and ordered an enquiry. My gang, who had been seen hovering about the place for some days, was suspected. A Baboo Inspector with a couple of constables were despatched in pursuit. We were overtaken, and overhauled at the same time. Implements of coining were found in our possession, and we were all made prisoners. On the way back to head-quarters I succeeded in making terms with the Inspector for our release; after a good deal of haggling, he offered to set us at liberty and restore the implements of my profession for two hundred rupees. I paid him in counterfeits! and we were set at liberty. The Inspector and his men on returning to head-quarters reported to the Deputy Commissioner that they had come up with and overhauled the suspected gang of gipsies, but finding no evidence of crime in their possession they were allowed to continue their journey.




This story appeared quite satisfactory to the Deputy Commissioner and nothing more was thought of the matter.

It was not many days, however, after the above event before the treasury officer was startled by another influx of bad money. This time the counterfeits were traced to a woman living under the protection of the Baboo Inspector. The woman, when questioned, acknowledged receiving the money from her paramour. A search of the Inspector's quarters resulted in the discovery of one hundred and eighty of the spurious coins. The Baboo was arrested and charged with being in possession of, and passing bad money with a guilty knowledge. He admitted the possession, but denied the guilty knowledge, and in order to satisfy the court on this point he was obliged to admit how he came by the coin.\* This admission placed my neck in extreme danger. A warrant was immediately issued for my arrest and that of my accomplices. The process was backed up by the offer of a large reward for our apprehension. I, therefore, deemed it prudent to break with the gipsies and flee from British territory. And that is how, my friends, I am here amongst you to-night!

The coiner rose amidst tremendous applause.

\* Fact. The Inspector on his own admission was convicted and sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment on the minor charge of receiving an illegal gratification and releasing the coiner. The case was heard before Mr. Driberg, Deputy Commissioner, Assam.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

---

### JOHN CHINAMAN'S STORY.

THE professional coiner having concluded his entertaining narrative amidst deafening applause, the chief called upon John Chinaman for the next story. He accordingly began in this manner.

We Chinese are designated "Celestials" because from the earliest ages the Empire of China has been called "Heaven," the Emperor thereof being known as "Heaven's Son" or "God", and naturally the people of such "Celestial deities" began to be called "Celestials." The Emperor combines in his person the attributes of supreme magistrate and sovereign pontiff, and as "Heaven's Son" he is accountable to "Heaven" alone for all his acts. His authority is, perhaps, the most complete and deeply rooted

that exists anywhere on the face of the earth. There is no nobility, no priesthood, no privileged body of any description which can share, and thereby diminish, the respect and influence claimed by the sovereign. In no individual does there exist any sentiment of honour or pride which can deter him from laying himself in the dust beneath his imperial master's feet. The Emperor is also styled "Son of the sun and moon" and this doctrine is incorporated in all our religious books and our oldest traditions. As "Heaven" has not two suns, earth has not two kings, a family has not two masters, a sovereign power has not two directors, so the "Celestial Empire" has not two Emperors, but one only; and he is heaven's sole vicegerent upon earth, every other sovereign being considered as his vassal. He seldom appears in public and when he does so far condescend he is clothed in robes like the sun. All brightness! splendour! and magnificence!

The children of the Celestial Empire are the only people on earth that taste of the sweets of heaven on this side of the grave. For are we not all consumers of opium in one form or other? and who, that is not an opium eater or smoker, ever had a foretaste of heaven upon earth! None! none! The Chinese dearly love their opium. They will do anything for it. Gamble, smuggle, rob, murder, aye, and sell their wives and families for it! To them it is life. When they are without it, the infernal regions gape and yawn and send forth battalions of demons, devils, voracious monsters with wings, snakes and other poisonous reptiles, to dog your steps; to grin at you; to mock you; to spit at you; to hiss at you, and cry "*Hoi-yoi-ai!*" But a single drachm of opium changes all this, opens Heaven and angels robed in garments of dazzling white-



ness come forth to fan you, to shampoo you, and lull you to rest by sweetest music! Sorrow, pain, even loves and debts, are forgotten and you gradually sink into a trance of the most absorbing bliss.

When the effects of the opium begin to work off, the victim gradually awakes to consciousness. Then the demons appear again. First one starts up, grins and retires, then a snake appears, rears its hood, shoots forth its forked tongue, hisses and retires. Then a monster like a dragon comes up, spits fire at you and disappears. By this time you are thoroughly awake and a whole battalion of demons, snakes, and dragons rush upon you. You try to escape, but they follow you, grin at you, spit at you, and torment you, wherever you go! There is only one escape from their fury. Another dose of opium! To this you fly for very life! But the dose, to produce the desired effect, must exceed that of the preceding libation. The craving for opium, if not satisfied, exceeds the torments of hell! Aye, ten thousand hells!

I will now proceed to describe the principal forms in which opium is consumed. Amongst my countrymen, the favourite form of indulgence is smoking the drug. A piece of crude opium is attached to the point of a knitting needle. This is held over the flame of a candle until it acquires the consistency of treacle. The needle during the process, is turned round and round to prevent the opium falling off. When it is sufficiently roasted the opium is taken off the needle with the fingers, rolled into a little ball, and inserted in a small hole in the bowl of a pipe specially prepared for smoking the drug. The customers now range themselves on a *machan* in a reclining position, and the pipe is passed round.

It is necessary while smoking to hold the bowl of the

pipe over the flame of a candle. One of the most interesting sights ever witnessed is to watch the changing features of an opium smoker as he inhales the delicious nectar! The eyes which were before dull and expressionless suddenly become bright and beam with intelligence. The skin which was dry and shrivelled assumes the appearance of a well nourished and healthy youth. In fact, the whole appearance of the man undergoes a rapid and magical change, from wistful deep dejected langour to voluptuous satisfaction and gratification. His very eyes close from sheer relish!

At this stage the opium smoker becomes very talkative and brilliantly witty. It is most amusing to listen to their conversation during certain stages of intoxication. Here is an example: "My father," said an old opium smoker between the whiffs of his pipe, to his companion, "had a game preserve that extended from one end of India to the other. In this game preserve he built a palace, so extensive and lofty that it interfered with the movements of the moon in the heavens and had to be reduced one storey in consequence. Round the palace he had gardens so beautiful that the gods deemed it a privilege to be allowed to walk in them. The very flowers scented the whole earth!" "Oh! that is nothing" replied his companion. "My father had a menagerie that extended from one end of the world to the other. And in this menagerie he had a giraffe so tall that he used to employ it to bring down snow from the clouds to cool his *sherbet* in summer." "Oh! that's nonsense" returned the first speaker, "where could you get a stable large enough for such an animal?" "My father used to stable his giraffe in a wing of your father's palace!" replied the second speaker.

At this witticism there was a general laugh. Then a third smoker intimated that he had also a tall story to tell, and craved the attention of his companions while he related it. There was instant silence. The speaker took two or three short sharp draws from his pipe and emitting the smoke gradually from his nostrils thus began:—

“My friends, a few years ago a great part of China was laid desolate by floods. My father was a shipbuilder and a man of great ingenuity. His fame had reached the ears of the Emperor, so when the floods came, my father was sent for and consulted by His Majesty as to the best means of saving the population of the submerged provinces. He proposed building a ship, the carrying capacity of which should exceed the combined tonnage of all the nations of the earth, if the Emperor would only direct that all the able-bodied men in China be placed at his services for one month; with free permission to make use of the State forests. His Majesty consented, and at the end of the month a ship like a floating continent was constructed capable of accommodating twenty millions of people. The masts of the ship reached to the heavens. It was deemed one of the wonders of the world. The Emperor was so pleased with it that he raised my father to the rank of chief master builder of His Majesty’s royal navy, and bestowed upon him a young princess of the household, with feet so small that it required magnifying glasses to see them.”

The last words were uttered with great deliberation and emphasis. Then the narrator raised himself on his elbow and gazed upon his companions with a look of pleasure not unmingled with a spice of contempt, as much as to say “is there any one present who can beat that?” The allusion to the small feet, the beauty spot of a Chinese lady,



seemed to tickle the fancy of most of the listeners and caused a good deal of hilarity. When the laughter had somewhat subsided, an old frequenter of the opium den raised himself up on his elbow; and said, "Look here, friends, I can tell a much better story than that you have just heard." There was profound silence in an instant, and the speaker continued:—"My father was a great philosopher and was noted all over China for his wit and wisdom. During the reign of the last Emperor the population of China had increased to such an extent that it caused serious alarm to the rulers of the land. The Emperor thought to relieve the pressure of population on the soil by shipping off the surplus to America and Australia. But both these countries took alarm at the rapid influx of Chinamen and closed their ports against the Celestial. In this dilemma the Emperor sent for my father and asked him what was to be done under the circumstances. It was a question not easily answered and my father, asked for time to think it over. This was granted and my father returned to his study to work out the problem. The moment he entered, he ordered one hundred pipes of opium to be prepared and had them ranged in his study for immediate use. He then locked himself in and went to work. He smoked and thought and thought and smoked for a whole week. At last an idea struck him. He had heard or read somewhere that the moon was a planet capable of sustaining life, that it was uninhabited and no man's land. The only difficulty was in getting there. Big with this idea he started up, got together all the best carpenters in China and constructed a ladder that reached from the earth to the moon. This he ascended, and after exploring the planet returned to make his report to the Emperor. The latter was

delighted at the prospect of having an entire world all to himself and issued orders for his subjects to emigrate at once. No one attempted to move. But the Emperor's mandate had the desired effect. All the surplus population committed suicide rather than emigrate to the moon. Since then the people have learned to exercise more self-restraint. My father got the credit of initiating this great reform. He was raised to the rank and dignity of a royal councillor and the Emperor conferred upon him two princesses with feet so small, that no human eye, even with artificial aid, has ever been able to make out their shape and form."

Here the man who related the tall ship story jumped up in a rage at being outdone and swore the whole story of the trip to the moon was a lie. "Where," said he, "could bamboos be procured long enough to make a ladder that would reach to the moon?" "Oh! my friend" returned the party addressed. "My father made his ladder of the masts of your father's ship." This was a settler and created great merriment.

By this time the smokers had passed the stage of hilarity and magnificent visions, to that of intoxication and and were rapidly sinking into a state where we will leave them and proceed to the room occupied by the opium drinkers. Here we find a crowd of eager, excited emaciated creatures round a barred window. This is where the drug is weighed out and sold. As each man is served he passes on into a compartment occupied by a number of *charpoy*s. He selects one, and sits down upon it to dilute his opium. The house provides him with water and a brass cup for the purpose. When ready for use the mixture has the appearance of Dublin "XXX." The man then drinks it off, rolls over on the *charpoy* and is soon

beyond all earthly troubles. Opium taken in this way never produces the glorious visions and hilarity which smoking the drug induces. Eating the crude opium gives the least enjoyment of all the forms in which the drug is consumed. It is a glorious occupation keeping an opium den. (Here a voice from one of the band of dacoits called out) "Then why did you give it up, John?" "That's just what I'm coming to" was the reply. You see I didn't purchase the opium consumed in my shop through the Collector. Government opium passes through too many hands to be profitable. I got the drug direct from the cultivator and pocketed all the advantages of trading without the intervention of middlemen. I sent my wife twice a month to Patna. She used to return to Calcutta "big in the family way." Unfortunately one day, while stepping from the train at Howrah platform she had a miscarriage. Reid the detective was there, jumped to her assistance, and, in the absence of a midwife, acted as accoucher. She was safely delivered of a premature birth. But it ruined my business. My house was searched and a large quantity of opium found for which I could, according to the terms of the indictment, give no satisfactory account. I was convicted of being in possession of contraband opium, and as the case was considered an aggravated one, sentenced to undergo one year's rigorous imprisonment without the option of a fine. On the day that I received my sentence there was a countryman of mine convicted of gambling. His punishment was fourteen days' house of correction. We were both sent to jail in the prison van together. My fellow prisoner was an inveterate opium eater. He told me this on the way, and asked my advice as to the best mode of smuggling a small supply into prison. Adding that he could never live through the



term of his incarceration, small as it was, without a daily dose of the drug. He had at the time about his person sufficient to carry him through for fourteen days, but how to get it into jail without being detected was the difficulty. I advised him to make the opium into a flat cake and conceal it under his tongue. I had heard of this being done before with success. I was going to do it, I said, and advised him to do likewise. He adopted my example. But as we were being searched in the reception room, when his turn came, he grew nervous and frightened and in his agitation gulped down the cake of opium.

It was almost dark when we reached the prison, and the jailor in consequence told the warder, after we had been searched, to lock us up together for the night and take our descriptive rolls and put us into prison clothes the next morning. This was accordingly done. But after my fellow prisoner and I had found ourselves alone together in the same cell, I was horrified to learn that he had swallowed his ball of opium! Neither of us knew what course to pursue. I knew it was an offence to attempt to smuggle opium into jail, involving a punishment of three months' rigorous imprisonment, and my companion swore he would prefer dying under the influence of his favourite drug than incur this penalty. So he said to me, "Look here mate, if anything should happen to me, before morning, you must try and convey the news to my wife. She lives in a lane off Bentinck Street." And he gave me the full directions where she was to be found and all particulars about her and his circumstances. I promised to do as he desired. But at the same time I tried to persuade him into the belief, that as he was an habitual opium eater the quantity he had inadvertently swallowed, though large, would do him no

harm. He was inclined, I could see, to this opinion also. So we each wrapped ourselves up in the prison blanket and went to sleep, when I awoke the next morning my companion was a corpse! As quick as lightning the thought struck me of taking his name and personating the dead man. "If I succeed," I said to myself, "including detection, I will gain my freedom in fourteen days instead of fifty-two weeks. That in itself is worth risking something for. Besides I will have a home to go to on my release." So I changed clothes with the deceased and adopted his name and profession. He was a carpenter by trade.

When the warder came to open the cell in the morning I told him what had happened to my companion during the night. That he had attempted to smuggle a piece of opium into jail, but swallowed it by accident while he was being searched. The medical examination of the body bore out this statement and so the matter ended. As the deceased and I were about the same age and resembled one another very much in appearance, the deception was never discovered. I was accordingly released at the end of fourteen days. I made straight for the house of the deceased, his wife was at home and expecting her husband's return. So without further ceremony I rushed into her arms. Her head dropped in my bosom and she began to weep and reproach me for getting into trouble. I swore I would never enter a gambling house again. This pacified her and she set about getting me something to eat. I refrained as much as possible from talking for fear of betraying myself. She noticed this but I pretended that the want of opium in jail had nearly drove me mad, and had so affected my memory that I could scarcely find out my own house. "Yes, John dear," she returned sympathetically.

tically, "and it appears to have altered your voice somewhat also." This remark startled me not a little.

But still I could see she had no suspicion as yet that I was not her husband. All went well till bed time. We had scarcely retired for the night when she jumped out of bed, rushed into the street and began to cry at the top of her voice, "He's not my John; he's not my John; I know he's not!" I made tracks by the back door and bolted for my life, afraid of being recognised, and perhaps charged with murder if I were caught. I deemed it prudent to flee from British territory and never show my nose in Calcutta again.

It is to these circumstances, my friends, you are indebted for the honour of having a Celestial amongst you to-night.

---



## CHAPTER XXIX.

## THE STORY OF A CITY SHARPER.

JOHN CHINAMAN having concluded his entertaining narrative in the midst of uproarious applause, the Chief called upon Hurry Churn Das for the next story, who thus began:—

My name is Hurry Churn Das, son of Shama Churn Das. I am, as my name indicates, a Bengali Hindoo, and hail from the capital of India. My governor was a man of some substance. He had made his pile by retailing adulterated *ghee* in Teretta Bazar. I was an only son. The educational mania was, at the time of which I am speaking, at its height. All the petty shop-keepers in the city were making “native gentlemen” of their sons, by

teaching them a little smattering of English. My father followed the example of others. I was sent to school to study for the bar. But, although I had a strong desire to learn, and the ambition to become a "native gentleman," I had not the faculty to acquire, or the memory to retain what I had, at the cost of much labour, acquired. This was all the more aggravating, because I felt myself to be the intellectual superior of most of my school fellows. I could never pull through an examination with honour to myself or credit to my teacher. This was a sore disappointment to the vendor of "adulterated *ghee*" who had looked forward to one day seeing his son a "Congress delegate" or something of that kind. My governor's chagrin was all the more intense, because the son of his neighbour and rival in trade, though quite a booby compared to me, had gone across the "black water" and returned a barrister-at-law. The fellow had a good memory you see and the "gift of the gab." But my mind was cast in a different mould. Unlike most Bengalis, I was an original thinker, and a great inventor, but a man of few words. While the son of my dad's rival in trade was only a servile imitator of men of greater intellects than his own. He even aspired to copy Tennyson, and, to be just to the cad, not without achieving a certain measure of success. The following is a specimen of his skill in the art of versification:—

*Young India has found its  
métier (métier)*

A Barrister-at-Law am I,

And to my native land a glory,

I'll tell you how I rose so high,

It is an interesting story,

Then lend me your attention, pray,

And listen well to what I say.

A little boy, I playmate found  
Among the village lanes so dusty,  
A simple string did gird me round,  
Whence hung a key a trifle rusty;  
Yet 'twas that little urchin's fate  
To be a Congress Delegate!

My father, honest man, amassed,  
By years of careful speculation,  
What kept me going till I'd passed  
Through such an English education  
*Young* As *Indians* ~~mild Bengalis~~ make their end  
Till they their masters turn and rend.

Ancestral cunning, too, I had,  
In Native dodges and manœuvres,  
I was a most engaging lad,  
My friends of me were warm approvers,  
And so I went across the sea,  
A Barrister-at-Law to be.

And over there they petted me,  
And called me "very interesting,"  
I blarneyed them so well you see,  
My manner there was no contesting;  
"So soft, so mild, such fine dark eyes!"  
The ladies said, with gentle sighs.

Then, more or less equipped with law,  
Returning, I began my mission,  
To sell for fees my power of jaw,  
And on the Stump to preach sedition,  
And carefully to foster fads  
Of ignorant, globe-trotting Rads.



Oh blessed Rads, consummate fools,  
The G. O. M. who blindly follow,  
What excellent and willing tools  
Ye are ! Our lies how well ye swallow !  
How difficult, by your kind aid,  
The British rule in India's made !

Continue, then, to think as now,  
Your countrymen, by rice and curry  
Are made out here real fiends somehow,  
And help us still their souls to worry ;  
At home, obstruction is your game ;  
Help us out here to play the same.

We've learnt your clap-trap, and can spout  
And manufacture resolutions  
As well as you, and prate about  
Self-Governmental institutions,  
And scream and yell and jabber too,  
Just like the parrots in the Zoo.

'Tis thus we for your favour bid,  
And confidently hope you'll throw us  
The power of sahibs to get rid  
Who live among us and who know us ;  
And when we oust that hated race,  
Ours will be power, profit, place.

We'll get their pay cut down, till they  
Can't live upon it, then succeed them,  
For we can live and put away,  
On what would little more than feed them ;  
(We needn't mention that we'd make  
The difference up by bribes we'd take.)

To some small share of gain we may  
Admit those sahibs, so demented,  
Who from their kindred fall away,  
With Black Supremacy contented;  
To such a one from our grand feast  
Of loot, we'll toss a bone, poor beast.

Ah, how for my dear native land  
My patriot bosom's warmly panting!  
(To loot her, you will understand,  
Is what I mean, apart from canting)  
Hasten then, hasten, happy day,  
When we, instead of sahibs, hold sway.

My father had been to a meeting of "Congress delegates," where the above poem was recited. It was received with tremendous applause. Several voices were heard to exclaim "Shade of Shakspeare, all hail! We have a poet of our own." My father could stand this no longer. He hurried out of the Congress meeting, foaming with envy and wishing the author "had been the son of any other man." When he returned home, he ordered me out of the house and out of his presence. Like a dutiful son I obeyed. I thought his passion was only momentary, and would soon blow over. I was mistaken. He sent straightway for a *tickedar* (contractor), ordered a tank of immense size, to be dug, and a temple to be built at his own expense. This was done, of course, in order to prevent the bulk of his ill-gotten wealth falling into my hands at his death. Protest on my part was useless. I saw my patrimony melting away day by day, and had to grin and bear it the best way I could. The contractor I knew to be a great scoundrel. He had got my father properly into

his toils, and was determined to bleed him. He succeeded. The old man died just as his pious undertaking had been accomplished, without leaving behind him sufficient funds to purchase the firewood necessary to cremate the body.

I was now thrown completely upon my own resources And like our friend and brother, the "Baboo," had to go forth into the world and carve out an "honourable career" for myself. No easy matter this to a man who had spent his youth in fruitless study and missed his profession by failing to pass the required examination. Even a return to the occupation of my forefathers was rendered impossible. For was I not now a man of education, though I did fail in my examination and a "native gentleman" to boot. Retailing adulterated *ghee* was not therefore, the occupation suited to a "gentleman." The thing would look too ridiculous. Why it would be like Government House and the little tea shanty on the opposite side of the road, taking a stroll together through Old Court House Street; or the Ochterlony Monument and the policeman's sentry box at the end of the Red Road, setting to partners for a jig on the *maidan*! A native gentleman indeed, retailing *ghee* to low caste Indians. No, no; such a thing is impossible. So I began to turn my attention to the possibility of living on my wits. The life of a professional sharper seemed to chime in with my own inclinations. Nature too, assisted by art, had cut me out for such a career. My inventive faculties only required developing and strengthening by exercise, and where could a better training ground for the purpose be found than the place of my birth, charming, delightful Calcutta! Let me see, I have not yet quite forgotten my Algebra. The number of knaves in a community is to the number of dupes, as



the supply of a commodity is to the demand! now that is the equation I have to work out. Where shall I begin? The Bank of "—————" Be it so.

What I most particularly wanted just about this time was a supply of ready money. A little enquiry amongst the trading community—for is not Calcutta a great commercial city?—suggested an excellent plan of "raising the wind." It was this: When a merchant finds himself pushed for ready cash, the prevailing practice is to raise the sum required by mortgaging a part of his stock-in-trade rather than sell off at a sacrifice. The goods are accordingly put in "bond" and the banks advance money on the Bonded Warehouse receipt. This is the *dustoor* (custom) and the safest plan for a man of my profession to follow is the *dustoor*. When anything is done out of the ordinary course of business, it excites suspicion at once, especially amongst men engaged in commercial pursuits.

Well, you see, I had neither money nor merchandise to begin with, but I depended on my inventive genius to provide the latter; and this feat accomplished, I anticipated little difficulty in acquiring the former. This is what I did. I went to the Exchange godowns and bought up all the empty *jaconate* and *mulmull* packing cases I could find. These cases are all tin lined. I brought them home with me; had them filled with jute cuttings and brick bats—regulating the weight of each to the average weight of a genuine case of *jaconate* or *mulmulls*. I then had the tin lining carefully soldered down, the outside case rehooped and made to look to all appearance like goods fresh landed from England. This done I took my goods—one hundred and fifty cases in all—to the Bonded Warehouse and entered them as *jaconates* and *mulmulls*. I had three

or four of the cases specially prepared for inspection, should this be required. Only two of my own selection were opened and examined. These, of course, were found correct. I paid one year's rent and was accordingly furnished with the usual receipt. This I took straight to the ——— Bank and raised upon it the handsome sum of eighty thousand rupees, less twelve per cent. interest for one year !

I was now set up, and had twelve calendar months to run before I would be called upon to pay off the mortgage on the goods ; or, as I had never intended to pay it off, before the deception could be found out.

My first venture was a grand success. It is an excellent illustration of the popular saying—the man who cheats risks less and gains more than the common thief. “The knave ceaseth to be a knave ; he passeth into the fool the moment he lays himself open to detection !” That is my maxim. Any man of ordinary intellect may do a bit of “ingenuity” occasionally, but the great art of cheating—and it is a noble art, worthy of being classed among the “fine arts”—is to cheat without peril ! The gain should only be a second consideration. The master-mind, when maturing a grand enterprise, will always count the risk before the profits, and the man who understands his business will never expend great pains on small gains, that is the maxim of the miser ! The knave should have *grandeur d'âme* !

But to my subject. Banks had always a great fascination for me. There is nothing more gratifying to a man of my profession than “doing” a bank. It is not, therefore, surprising that after my first success, I should be found “trying it on” again somewhere else. But this time with a change of programme. I had noticed when there

was a great rush of people at the bank, the "pass" clerk, would collect from the public from twelve to twenty cheques at a time, and after writing off the amounts in the ledger initial them, and hand them back to the presenter to take to the cashier for payment. I saw in an instant the door that this lax system of doing business opened to a man of my profession, and I determined to take advantage of it. It was impossible, I could see, to recognise the party presenting the cheque from the party receiving payment. Now at this time a friend of mine employed in a large mercantile firm in the city was in the habit of cashing cheques for large amounts at the bank. I confided to him my plans and asked for his assistance. He demurred at first; but when I made it clear to him that there was absolutely no risk, he consented, in consideration of his standing in for a small share of the swag. "Look here," said I, when the 'pass' clerk calls out the name of your firm I step forward and hold out my hand for the cheque, take it to the cash department, and convert it into the current coin of the realm, and clear out. You be '*chup*' till the cheques are all passed, then step forward and say to the sahib, 'Sir, you have not returned me my cheque!' the sahib will look at you with astonishment, and you will return his stare with an expression of 'child-like innocence.' He will then refer to the ledger and tell you that he has already passed your cheque. 'But, sir,' you will make answer, 'you have not passed it to me. I have been standing here ever since you commenced work, waiting for it. I appeal to this gentleman (you must have a witness to prove you never left the spot from the time you gave in the cheque till you claim its return) that I have been standing here all the time!' The sahib will then call for the cashier, when, *tableau!* the



discovery is made that the cheque in dispute has already been paid! "To whom?" "Why, to the presenter of course." "Yes, but who was the presenter," queries the sahib. Echo, answers who! of course the cashier don't know, how could he be expected to know in the midst of such a crush of people at such a time—it was the day before the closing of the bank for the Pooja holidays!

This was a grand stroke of business. The cheque was for twenty thousand rupees! Not a bad day's work, was it? Of course there was a great fuss made over the matter at the time, but the bank had to stump up in the end. My accomplice was, like our friend and brother, the professional coiner, a man held in high estimation by his employers, a very powerful and influential firm, for honesty and integrity. No suspicion, therefore, ever rested on him. He was a man with too good a name for that. And what's the use of a good name if you can't turn it to profitable account as occasion may offer?\*

I now found myself in possession of sufficient funds to start banking, on a small scale, on my own account. It was necessary that I should have some ostensible means of supporting myself in the style and position of a native

\* A short time ago, three of the worst characters known to the police were found seated on the lee side of the Ochterlony Monument, absorbed in the pages of "Every Man His Own Detective." The obvious inference was, that the "sharpers" were "laying in stock for future use!" And that, therefore, these detective revelations did more harm than good. But does this argument not cut both ways? If the general public, for whose enlightenment these revelations are made, do not benefit by them, that is not the fault of the revelations. If there were no dupes in the world, there would be no knaves, and the only way to reduce "dupery" is to expose "knavery."

gentleman\* otherwise inquisitive people would begin to enquire "Where that fellow got the money he is able to flash about with!" This would go from mouth to mouth, till it reached the ears of the police, and some day, when somebody was "wanted" for doing an "ingenuity," I would be pounced upon. So in order to avoid such a contingency I set up a loan office in Mangoe Lane, and advertised in the daily papers "Money to lend on easy terms." These advertisements brought me numerous enquiries from needy adventurers. Then began the usual game, when Greek meets Greek, of diamond cut diamond! My play was to conceal the "knave of clubs" under the "queen of hearts," while I compelled my adversary to show every card in his hand. Metaphor aside. On receipt of an application for a loan, I despatched an agent to the applicant to enquire what security he was able to offer for the sum required. An agent on such an errand is sure to be courteously received, and if he plays his cards well, it is his own fault, if he fails to wheedle a handsome present, by way of bribe, of course, out of the would-be borrower. The agent makes it clear that it all depends upon his report whether the money will be advanced or not, and if the borrower is very much in need of the accommodation, he comes down handsomely. Guess his astonishment, when, a day or two afterwards, he calls at the loan office and is told that he cannot have the money as the security is not altogether satisfactory.

\* The term "native gentleman," "native doctor," "native editor," "native engineer," "native artist," "native magistrate" and the like, bear the same relation to the genuine article, as it is understood by Englishmen, that pinch-beck does to pure gold. When the natives, speaking of anything among themselves, use the words "O, its only *dessi*"—i. e., of native or country manufacture—they mean that it is only a vile imitation of the imported article.

"But your agent assured me it was all right," pleads the victim.

"My agent, I have just discovered to my cost, has been playing me false, and I have dismissed him in consequence."

This reply usually brings the negotiation to an end. For the dupe, whatever he may think of the matter, is obliged to be *chup*. If he charged my agent with cheating he would have to admit that he bribed the man to induce him to misrepresent facts to his employer, for the purpose of inducing the latter to do that which he would not otherwise do if he had not been so imposed upon. And as this is an offence punishable under the Indian Penal Code, no one would incur the penalty to satisfy his thirst for vengeance! Herein lay the safety of, not only myself, but my tools. This is what is called *par excellenee*, the art of cheating, because the cheater incurs no risk. On the contrary, you may safely threaten your victim with the provisions of the Penal Code if he attempts to open his lips!

But here a change comes o'er the spirit of my dream. I was startled one morning by an advertisement in the papers to the effect that if I did not appear within a given time and release my property in the Bonded Warehouse, it would be sold in satisfaction of the claim the bank had upon it. This put me in mind of the polite invitation of the farmer's wife to her ducks, "Dilly! dilly! won't you come and be killed!"

"Oh! no!" said I, "not for Joseph!" So the day of grace was allowed to pass without any person appearing in answer to the bank's advertisement. Then came the *denouement*. The bank went to take delivery, when, lo! the cases were found to contain nothing but brickbats and



jute cuttings! Dave Carson would have called the whole thing a case of "*Jute bhat!*" a commercial product for which Bengal is remarkable!

"Den-came-dat-man-vid-de-van-eye," as the Greeks and Jews called the Police Superintendent of the Northern Division, to investigate. But he could make nothing of it. His enquiry was a complete failure, and his failure was due to the fact that valuable time was consumed and energy expended in a fruitless search for a man bearing the same name that I had given into the bank. I had a very different name on the signboard over my loan office at this time.

Then the detectives had an innings. The Superintendent was an expert in the art of deciphering handwriting; so instead of looking for Shama Churn Das, the name by which I was known to the bank, he set about looking for a man who wrote from the "wrist," employed the fingers in forming the up and down strokes and brought the muscles of the fore arm into play in guiding the lateral movement of the pen. It was just such a "hand," the detective declared, that signed Shama Churn Das, and lifted eighty thousand rupees from the bank's counter fifteen months ago. And as no two men write the same "hand,"—a most recondite truth, which would have drawn from natives "Wah!" "wah!" but as the detective was dealing with Englishmen they expressed their admiration of the officer's wisdom in solemn silence—the real "Simon Pure" must turn up if the search is only persevered with. "A man may change his name a dozen of times," continued the detective "but his 'hand' never." Another recondite truth worth knowing! I, of course, treated the whole proceeding as a farce. But I was never more mistaken in my life. The handwriting was traced to me,

sure enough, and it was only by a piece of good luck I managed to escape! The *chowkeydar* of the beat, a man to whom I had been not only liberal but kind, informed me one evening as I was driving home that the detective police were watching my business premises in Mangoe Lane. I knew what this meant, so cleared out at once. I made first to Chandernagore and kept in hiding there for a few days. But my whereabouts were traced, and an extradition warrant applied for. Hearing this I thought it prudent to go further afield. So I wandered about from place to place until I fell in with this brave little band of dacoits and here I have remained ever since.

---

## CHAPTER XXX

## THE STORY OF THE OJHA (DEMON EXPELLER.)

The "City Sharper" having made an end of his very entertaining narrative, for which he was greeted with *Sabash ! sabash !* and other demonstrations of approval, the chief called upon the Ojha (exorcist) for the next story. He, accordingly began after this manner.

I am the son of a celebrated Bhutadiya (demon expeller) and, as our friend and brother the *Chowkeydar* says, the grandson of a *Bhutadiya*. In fact I would be justified in saying that the trade of *bhutadiya* not only existed but flourished long before the creation of the first man was thought of. For, according to Jewish history, a history which the Christians believe to be an inspired record of facts, so it must be true, *bhuts* (demons) were expelled from heaven when the component parts of our planet



floated through space in a state of vapour. Therefore of all Hindoo institutions, that of demon expeller claims the highest antiquity. So I beat our friend and brother the "*Ghatak*", hollow in this respect.

Before, however, entering into the mystery and grand secrets of my profession, I may as well explain that there are in Bengal two kinds of exorcists; the one expels witches and the other ghosts. The latter is by far the most important personage. Because when a ghost enters into the person of a man or woman it is no easy matter to drive him out; but a subject under the influence of a witch can be cured by the recital of certain charms. When the common people want to know whether a man or woman is under the influence of a witch or a ghost, they burn turmeric under his or her nose. If the afflicted person endures the fumes of the turmeric quietly it is evidence of the presence of a witch; but, on the other hand, if the patient is furious, shrieks and yells, and exhibits the strength of two or three ordinary people, under the ordeal, a very trying one, it is proof positive that a ghost of a very malignant disposition has to be dealt with. This point determined, the friends of the afflicted person are able to send for the proper exorcist.

Of Bengali ghosts, that is, the spirits of deceased Bengali men and Bengali women there are a very great variety. The first and most honourable class are those called *Brahmadaityas* (spirit of departed Brahmans). They generally take up their abode in the trunk of the *gayá-asvatha* (*Ficus cordifolia*) the most sacred species of the *Ficus religiosa* and in the trunk of the holy *Sripthal* (*Aegle Marlemos*). Unlike also other spirits the *Brahmadaityas* only partake of food and drink religiously pure. They never injure or frighten people like common ghosts, never waylay benighted tra-

vellers or enter into the bodies of living men or women. Such pranks are beneath their dignity. But should their haunts be invaded or desecrated woe betide the man, woman or child who, however inadvertently, ventures near their *sanctum sanctorum*. When offended in this way, the rage of the *Brahmadaitya* knows no bounds and nothing less than the neck of the offender will satisfy his vengeance. Hence a Hindoo will hardly ever venture to climb the *Ficus cordifolia*. When a Brahman is obliged to climb *Aegle Marmelos* for the purpose of procuring the sacred trefoil so largely used in Brahmanical worship, he first offers up prayers to all the gods of the Hindoo Pantheon, but in particular to the *Brahmadaitya* who inhabits the tree he is about to climb.

The next class of ghosts which is by far the most numerous are commonly called *bhutas*. They are the spirits of departed *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas*, and *Sudras*. They are all reputed to be very tall and very black. They occupy trees of every description, except, of course, those in which *Brahmadaityas* have taken up their abode. At night, these *bhutas* prowl about the fields and outskirts of the villages and frighten belated travellers, tipplers and opium smokers returning to their homes. They prefer unclean to clean neighbourhoods and are never seen in the vicinity of a temple, building, or tope reputed holy. They go about naked. They are very lascivious in their desires. They make love to women in various shapes and end by taking possession of them. A woman possessed of a lover *bhuta* is a very difficult subject to deal with. I am told that this is even so among English women, as well as Bengali matrons. These *bhutas* have a great antipathy to maidens, but are very partial to married women and widows, especially the latter. It is quite a common occurrence in

the *zenana* to have the slumbers of the fair inmates disturbed by a widow screaming out in her sleep: "Oh mother! a *bhuta* is trying to take possession of me!"

The Bengali *bhuta* not only eats rice, but all descriptions of human food. Their favourite dish is, however, fish. Consequently when a Bengali is obliged to go out for any distance from his home after night he is sure to take with him a piece of fish to bribe the *bhuta* if he should encounter one on the way. There are instances on record of two *bhutas* attacking a man at one and the same time. In such cases the best thing to do is to throw down the fish, and clear off while the *bhutas* are quarrelling over their favourite morsel. The best way to protect one's self against a *bhuta*, in the absence of fish, is to repeat the names of some of the Hindoo gods and goddesses, especially Kali, Durga, and Siva. The last is named *Bhutanath*, which being interpreted means, the god who rules over the spirits of departed men and women. Another mode of guarding against the attack of a *bhuta* is to carry with you after dark a rod of iron. They have a great antipathy to metal, especially iron, and on this account some natives of Bengal wear iron rings on their toes. This is a protection against *bhutas* even when asleep. But neither fish, flesh, nor fowl; neither the repetition of the names of all the gods in the Hindoo Pantheon, nor the carrying of a rod of iron, nor the wearing of a ring of that metal, will prevent a *bhuta* from frightening a man or woman at a distance; they are only safeguards against a ghost touching the person.

*Bhutas* are all male ghosts; but there are three classes of female ghosts in Bengal, called *Petnies*, *Sankhchihnis* and *Skandhakatas*. Of the first very little is known, except that they are extremely filthy in their habits and



person. They smell, when near, even worse than a polecat. They are, like the male ghosts, very lascivious, and commit the most atrocious crimes for the gratification of their lust. But intercourse with them produces incurable insanity. The second class of female ghosts, *Sankhchihnis* or *Sankhachurnis*, so-called because they appear in clothes as white as driven snow—take up their position after nightfall at the foot of large trees. They do not move about like other ghosts, are not of a malignant or revengeful disposition, and only frighten people from a distance. If anyone has the courage to approach them, they melt away and completely disappear.

The third and last class of female ghosts, *Skandhakatas*, so-called from the circumstances that their heads have been cut off from above their shoulders—are the most dreaded by the people of all the evil spirits in the land. They inhabit low, moist and swampy neighbourhoods and wander about in the dead of night. They have a strange mode of locomotion. The headless trunk is bent into the form of a cart wheel, and in this position they roll along the ground.

But woe be to the unfortunate individual that crosses their path after dark !

Having given you a true, full, and correct account of the ghosts of Bengal—I mean, of course, the Hindoo ghosts, I will now proceed to show how, like the magicians of old, I make the spirits of the invisible world obedient to my will. Suppose a woman in a distant village “shadow smitten”—that is, that the shadow of some spirit has fallen upon her. While in this state she entertains the wildest and most extravagant fancies. She imagines herself the wife of a spirit husband and takes up her position under the tree in which her invisible spouse is believed to

reside. Here she sweeps a circle quite clean, prepares a flower bed, constructs a *chula*, cooks rice and fish and makes every possible preparation for entertaining her spirit lord, while her friends and neighbours look on with superstitious awe! This continues perhaps for a day or two, and if there is no apparent sign of the woman recovering from her delusion the family *guru* (priest) is consulted. He pronounces the woman “possessed” and the *ojha* is sent for.

The moment the “shadow smitten woman” feels the breath of the exorcist—for his first act is to breathe upon her with a noise like the hissing of a serpent—she utters a wild scream and falls on the ground face downwards. The *ojha* squats down beside her and shouts the following *mantras* :

*Dhula sattam, madhu pattam, ladhula karam sar; asi hajar, kote bandam, jeis hajar lar.*

Standing up the *ojha* takes some holy water from a bamboo and sprinkles his patient. She immediately goes off into convulsions and commences to froth at the mouth. The ghost doctor continues the *mantras* :—*Je pathe yana amuk chedede kes, Dain, yogini, pret, bhut, Bao, batas, deva, dut, Kaharo naiko nabaleo. Kar ájna? Kanadar Kama-Khya hádijhi-chander ájná. Siggir lag, lag, lay.*

This ended the patient becomes more calm and the *ojha* begins to question, not the woman remember, but, the spirit within her.

*Ojha* : “In the name of the great Mahadeva I demand to know who you are?”

*Spirit* : “I am a *bhuta* and have taken up my abode in this tree.”

*Ojha* : “Why have you left your abode to annoy this woman.”

*Spirit* : "The great Mahadeva has given me this woman as a companion.

*Ojha* : "You must instantly leave her."

*Spirit* : "I decline to do so."

*Ojha* : "I will compel you to leave her this instant. But stay, whose body did you animate before you became a *bhuta* ?"

*Spirit* : "That is one of the secrets of the spirit world which cannot be revealed."

*Ojha* : "How long have you been a *bhuta* ?"

*Spirit* : "We have no means of measuring time in the spirit world. But I have been a *bhuta* since the year of the great famine of 1780. I was one of the victims of that dire calamity."

*Ojha* : "Where did you reside before you took up your abode in this palmyra tree ? It is only ten years old."

*Spirit* : "I lived in the large mangoe tree that stood on the east of the village tank till it was destroyed by a storm. I then shifted my quarters to this palmyra tree."

*Ojha* : "How long do you propose to remain in this neighbourhood ?"

*Spirit* : "Till my spouse becomes a *bhuta* like myself."

*Ojha* : "How long will that be ?"

*Spirit* : "That is another of the secrets of the spirit world which we are not permitted to divulge."

*Ojha* : "In the meantime I must request you to leave this woman."

*Spirit* : "By what authority do you command me to do your bidding ?"

*Ojha* : "By the authority of the great Mahadeva whom all *bhutas* are bound to obey."

*Spirit* : "And if I refuse ?"

*Ojha* : "I will resort to force."



*Spirit*: "Do your worst. Here I remain till I see a more formidable antagonist."

Here the *ojha* is supposed to work himself into a terrible passion. He blows and hisses like a serpent. His eyes start from their sockets, and the very hair of his head rises and falls like the quills of an angry porcupine. Then muttering some *mantras* the *ojha* belabours the unfortunate woman with a stick till she, or rather the spirit within her, howls and shrieks with pain, while her friends and neighbours, in terror and amazement, stand trembling with superstitious fear. At last the woman falls exhausted on the floor, and the *ojha* takes a piece of root from a small box, wraps it up in a *pân* leaf and forces it down her throat. The woman remains unconscious for some hours. When she recovers she is no longer "shadow smitten"; the spirit has taken its departure. But only to play the same game over again with some other woman in the neighbourhood. The *ojha* receives his reward—a gift of money and new clothes—and he also takes his leave and disappears.

So you see, my friends, the profession of an *ojha* is by no means a bad business. (Here a voice from the company calls out) "Why did you give it up *ojha*?" "That's just what I'm coming to" replied the *ojha*. On the last occasion of my exorcising a "shadow smitten" woman—by the way, this time a married matron—the husband, who was of a very jealous disposition, had some suspicion that the spirit that "overshadowed" his wife was not that of a dead but a living lover. So when it came to expulsion by force he insisted that I should lay it on heavy. I did so, with the result that his wife died. The police and the English magistrate got wind of it, held an inquest on the body and from the evidence of the medical officer, also an Englishman, brought in a verdict of wilful

murder against your humble servant and issued a warrant for his arrest. I, of course, made myself scarce, and, cursing the British Government and its damnable institutions, I shook the dust off my feet in the face of my enemies and crossed the border into my native territory. So here I am safe and sound in wind and limb and a member of a celebrated gang of dacoits. Hurra! Hurra! Hurra!

---

CHAPTER XXXI.

---

THE STORY OF A KOORD: A ROMANCE IN REAL  
LIFE.

WHEN the chief saw that the Ojha had made an end of his interesting and amusing narrative which was listened to with great attention and loudly applauded when concluded, he called upon Nasr-u-deen to continue the entertainment with an account of his adventures before becoming a dacoit. Whereupon Nasr-u-deen, in obedience to his Chief's command, right cheerfully thus began:—

I am a descendant of one of the celebrated Koord families which Shah Abbas the Great induced about the beginning of the seventeenth century to migrate from Koordistan, on the Turkish frontier, and settle along the northern boundary of Persia, with view of protecting it



from Turkman inroads, on the principle, in fact, "of setting a thief to catch a thief." This policy succeeded well enough so long as the Persian rulers were able to control the Koords, (a name, which being interpreted, means "son of a thief") but when these came to make common cause with the Turkmen, which they did, as they grew in number and power, the old system of plundering, and slave hunting, began again, and has lasted, with hardly an interval, until the present day, and will continue to last, unless the conditions and circumstances of the people alter, for ever.

I will pass over the early years of my life, as these contain little in the way of adventure, that has not been told over and over again. I was in my twentieth year when I was first called upon to join a raiding expedition into Persia. The venture turned out a grand success. We returned laden with spoil in the shape of horses, cows, sheep, and young men and maidens. Our custom in regard to the latter was this. After the headmen of my tribe had made a selection for themselves of the youth and beauty of the captives, the remainder were sold in the slave market and the proceeds divided amongst the raiders. I fell desperately in love with one of the young captives, and determined, at all costs, she should neither be brought to the hammer, nor become the property of any of our chiefs. I had been kind to her on the road and she seemed to cling to me instinctively for protection. *A* amongst our people, one of the greatest crimes that a man can commit is to violate the code of honour that exists in regard to the distribution of property acquired by violence. It had to be all surrendered for the purpose of being disposed of to the best advantage for the common good of the community. I therefore knew that my fair Persian

and I would be separated the moment we reached our village. So the first night after we had crossed the Persian border when all the camp was buried in slumber, I cleared off with my prize. How delighted the poor little thing was when she thought herself free! We shaped our course towards the Attrek Valley, where some of my tribe had settled down to quiet and peaceful occupations, intending to follow their example. But fate was against us. We had been about a fortnight on the road when we encountered a Russian military expedition moving in the direction of Khiva. I was arrested as a spy, and separated from the joy of my heart. The fair Persian was taken before the commander of the expedition, and through sheer fright, revealed every thing. This led to my release, but the girl for whose sake I would have walked knee deep in blood, was sent under escort to the Shah of Persia with a letter detailing the circumstances under which she was discovered and her own account of the affair. I learned afterwards that the Russian officials had a very different object in view in restoring the young Persian to her people than that of righting her wrongs. Rumours had reached Persia of the presence of a Russian expedition on the route between Krasnovodsk and Khiva. It was necessary under these circumstances to mislead Persia as to the real object of the expedition. The news of the Russian movement might reach British India through Persia, get into the English papers, and raise disagreeable and inconvenient questions for St. Petersburg to answer, in the House of Commons. The clever and infamous General in command of the Russian expedition at once saw his way out of the difficulty in the restoration of the little Persian captive. He wrote to the Shah that the girl was found in the possession of a Koord

between Krasnovodsk and Khiva *by a Scientific exploring party from St. Petersburg!* and that after hearing her story he decided upon restoring the maiden to her country and people. The General then went on to give a description of the wild and waterless waste his party was then engaged in exploring for *purely scientific purposes*. The girl's escort also gave out in every town and village it passed through that it formed part of a Russian scientific exploring party. This served, for the time being, to quiet the fears of the people and mask the advance of the army on Khiva.

The day after the departure of the fair Persian the Russian General sent for me and questioned me regarding my country and people, the Merv Turkmans and other tribes. I was able to give him a good deal of information on these subjects, as the tribe to which I belonged led, for the most part, a nomad life, at which he was immensely pleased. When I had finished he told me it had been his intention to have made me over to the Persian authorities for execution on a charge of raiding and kidnapping; but as I could be useful to him on his march to Merv, after the fall and annexation of Khiva, he would pardon me and place me on the staff of the intelligence department of his army. I knew it would be useless for me to refuse this offer, circumstanced as I then was, so I consented, with every appearance of satisfaction, and promised to be true and loyal to the Russian cause, so long as I ate the salt of the stranger. But the thought of how I had been cruelly parted from the fair Persian exercised my thoughts a good deal and my heart yearned for vengeance. However, I had no opportunity of betraying my enemy and the foe of my country with any chance of success, just then, so, to save my own neck, I continued to



work with apparent zeal, and gained the General's confidence by bringing in correct information.

The advance on Khiva was slow and weary work. The entire route from Krasnovodsk is a complete wilderness, and almost devoid of water. For a long time I could not understand why Russia wanted to annex this perfectly useless tract of land and desert. The problem, however, was not long in solving itself. After the treaty extorted from the Khivan Khan had been signed, a forward movement on Merv commenced immediately. I could then see the object of Russia in annexing territory comparatively worthless in itself, it secured access to those strategic lines across the steppe, which were essential to the attainment, sooner or later, of that goal, which her statesmen never lose sight of—a secure position in Central Asia. It forms the only connecting link between the Caspian and the Oxus.

The Russian movement in the direction of Merv met with very little opposition till it reached Kizil Arvat, a strong position of the Tekke tribes. Here General Lomakin appeared upon the scene as the supreme authority. He issued a magniloquent circular to the Turkman Chiefs, inviting them to come in and pay their respects to him as the representative of the "Great Sovereign." This invitation was answered by six thousand Tekkes bearing down upon the Russian column, and nearly exterminating it to a man. The Russians after their defeat at Kizil Arvat retired to the cantonment of Petro Alexandrovsk to await reinforcements from St. Petersburg. In the meantime an arrangement was arrived at between the Tekke chiefs and the Shah of Persia. By it the Merv Turkmen declared their allegiance to Persia. They engaged on their part that raids on Persian territory should be discon-

tinued; that the Persian flag should be hoisted, at Merv, and that a Persian representative should reside there; that one hundred hostages composed of men of position from the four divisions of the tribes, should reside at Meshed in Persia, but without their families; and that a body of one thousand horsemen should be placed at the service of the Shah's Government; these horsemen to provide their own horses and arms, and to be under the command of their own chiefs, but to be paid by the Shah, and to be employed in any part of Persia where their services might be required. On their side the Persian Government recognised the Merv Turkmen as Persian subjects, promising protection and favorable treatment; they agreed to defray the expenses of the hostages sent to Meshed at an estimated cost of about six thousand *tomans* a year; they also undertook to pay the horsemen furnished by the tribes for service in Persia at the same rate as that allowed by the government to the Khorassan irregular horse, which would amount annually to over thirty thousand *tomans*. In addition they granted permission for one thousand families of Merv Tekke Turkmen to occupy Old Saraks and the adjacent lands on the Tejmal, the name by which the Hurru Road comes to be known, as it flows northward through Turkman territory. The Shah gave a firman to the Turkman chiefs, stating in general terms that they had always been, and now are, subjects of Persia; that all disloyal acts committed by them in past years are condoned, and that in consideration of their now engaging to act as obedient and faithful subjects, His Majesty assures them of his protection and favour.

This compact with the Tekke Turkmen, which also included the Koords, was joyous news to me. I immediately abandoned the Russian cause and transferred my

services to Persia. My reasons for taking this step are these: I believed the Russian cause had received its death blow at Kizil Arvat; and service in Persia might lead to an interview with the girl, the hated Muscovite had parted me from. My knowledge of Russia's intentions regarding Merv was of considerable importance to the Turkman chiefs. I advised them to collect the Akhal tribes scattered along the line of the Attrek and concentrate them in the neighbourhood of Kizil Arvat which is a strong position and favourable for defence, in the event of the Russian column returning to the attack. The chiefs approved of the suggestion and immediately set about fixing a rallying point for the tribes in case of necessity. These precautions were not taken a moment too soon. General Lamakin returned to the attack on Kizil Arvat, reinforced by a strong brigade under Colonel Grotenhelm. The Tekke Turkmen did not wait for the attack. They surprised some two thousand Russians guarding six thousand camels collected for the expedition and succeeded in carrying off most of the animals. They were pursued by strong reinforcements and overtaken, a battle ensued. The Tekkes dismounted, and occupied a strong position on the brow of a hill, where they made a parapet of the kneeling camels, from behind which they opened fire on the enemy with such effect as to stop their further advance. The fight lasted till night, when both parties retreated in opposite directions, the Muscovites finding it too hazardous to follow an enemy who had suddenly and unexpectedly developed such remarkable tactics. The defeated Russians came to the conclusion that the Tekkes were not only armed with English rifles but commanded by British officers, and in consequence retired to the cantonment of Petro Alexandrovsk opposite Khiva. All further opera-



tions in the direction of Merv were suspended, for this season, pending instructions from St. Petersburg.

With this move most of the Tekke tribes returned to their homes, while I took advantage of the temporary cessation of hostilities to make another bid for the fair Persian. I induced a brother tribes-man to accompany me to her village. We reached the spot without accident or molestation. But on seizing the girl in the dead of night an alarm was raised, and we were surrounded and made prisoners; not, however, before half a dozen of men had fallen to our spears. The villagers bound us with cords and kept us in duress till the arrival of the police. We were then charged with being members of an unlawful assembly for the purpose of raiding in Persian territory. The villagers in their evidence before the magistrate swore that we belonged to a band of marauders that had made their escape when the alarm was raised, and that they only succeeded in securing two of the number. I saw the seriousness of this charge in an instant. It would at once be put down as a breach of faith on the part of the Turkmans and probably lead to the withdrawal of the firman granted by the Shah at a critical period. I tried to explain matters to the magistrate before whom the case was heard, but the evidence against me was too strong for my bare statement to have any effect.

After one or two remands it was finally decided that we should be sent to the Persian capital under a strong escort for execution; for raiding in Persian territory was, and still is, punishable with death. Fortunately my escort were all followers of the Prophet and my morning, mid-day, and evening devotions were never interfered with. I was always released from my bonds on such occasions. One evening at sundown while both prisoners and escort

were engaged at prayers on the bank of a large tank I saw a handee floating on the water, mouth downwards. It flashed upon me in an instant that I might be able to effect my escape by making use of the handee, so jumping up from my devotions I plunged into the tank, dived out to where the earthen vessel was floating, rose gradually beneath it and placed it over my head. The tank, which was very deep, was dragged in the vicinity of the spot where I had plunged in but failing to rescue or recover the body the search was abandoned when night had set in. The officer believing I had committed suicide proceeded on his march towards the capital with my fellow-prisoner. I remained in the tank till the night was far advanced, and then succeeded in making good my escape. About a mile from where I had parted with my escort I met a Persian peasant in a lonely part of the road. I tried to induce him to exchange clothes with me. He refused, and I strangled him on the spot, took possession of his garments and travelled in disguise through Persia to Afghanistan. Arriving at Cabul I enlisted as a soldier in the Ameer's bodyguard. I used to amuse and entertain my comrades with accounts of my adventures with the Russians; and soon grew to be very popular in the garrison.

I had scarcely been two years in the service of the Ameer when a Russian Mission arrived at Cabul. I was one of the guard of honour sent out to conduct them to the palace. Guess my surprise at recognising amongst the Mission two of the officers I had served in the expedition against the Tekke Turkmen! I fell ill at once, and had to be sent to hospital, not shamming, mind you, but really ill—incapacitated through sheer funk! I knew that if I had been recognized by the Russian officers I would

have been claimed and instantly handed over to their tender mercies. I therefore determined to keep out of harm's way as much as possible. In fact, to remain in hospital till the mission had departed. But my plans were very soon upset. It appears that some of the many questions the mission had come to discuss with the Ameer were Persia's authority over the Kurdish frontier tribes and the possibility of converting them into Russian soldiers. Would they fight against the Turcomans? The Koords are unquestionably the most independent and manliest race upon the northern frontier of Persia, and have for centuries waged a fairly balanced border warfare with the tribes that were now opposed to Russia. They would, therefore, if they could be prevailed upon to rally round the Russian standard, prove valuable auxiliaries in the then contemplated operations against the Turcomans.

Then again the scientific members of the mission wanted to know something of Khorasan, its mineral resources, its reputed coal fields, copper, lead, silver, gold, and turquoise mines. The latter the only turquoise mines in the world.

These enquiries naturally led to the discovery that there was a Koord soldier in the Ameer's bodyguard, a sharp intelligent cove, who would be able to throw some light on the subjects referred to. I was consequently ordered to be placed at the disposal of the Russians! But finding I was in hospital at the time, it was decided to postpone the investigation till I had recovered. This information was communicated to me by the medical officer. He said I had to get well quick as I was particularly wanted by the Ameer's guests at the palace. This news put me in a terrible funk. That night I bolted from hospital and never drew rein till I was safe in British



territory. Here it was necessary for me to do something for a living. I couldn't work, so I became a *mulvi* and picked up a living by going from mosque to mosque. In this way I reached the Capital of India, where I first attracted the notice of the police. I was taken for, or rather mistaken for, a Russian spy! and detectives were dodging my steps for weeks before I knew anything about it. When I did make the discovery I tried to get away from Calcutta, but was arrested at Howrah as I was getting into the train on my way to Patna. I was first taken before the Superintendent of the Dective Department who recorded my statement and put me through a severe cross-examination. After this I was taken to the Foreign Office, where I underwent another examination, my statements being tested by frequent references to a large sheet map that hung against the wall. Then a consultation was held at which it was decided that I was no spy but a harmless individual, more afraid of the Russians than my inquisitors.\* So I was set at liberty with a present of money, by way of compensation for the trouble I had been put to. But still I was not happy, I could not get rid of the uncomfortable feeling that detectives were still dodging my steps. So I resolved to quit British territory. The civilisation of the English didn't suit my notions of liberty. I wandered about from one native state to another until at last I stumbled upon the only community of free people I had met since I quitted my own native land, this honourable band of dacoits. Here I live amongst congenial spirits and pass my days, and nights too—for nights must have been especially made for free lances such as we are—in congenial employment!

Bravo! Hurra! from the whole strength of the company.

\* Fact.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## CONCLUDING STORY—A BIG DACOITY.

THE Koord having finished his interesting narrative amid great applause, the chief gave notice, now that every man of the band had related his history, preparations would be made for a fresh adventure. A council of war was called to deliberate and arrange the details of the expedition.

The result was a proposal to surprise a frontier village in which some reputed rich traders resided. The only difficulty in the way, and it appeared at first sight a rather formidable one, was a strong guard of frontier police. This obstacle, it was evident to the meanest intellect, would have to be overcome, in some way or other, in order to insure the success of the adventure. My ingenuity was

consequently called into requisition. I solicited, and obtained time to think the matter over. Here is the result of my deliberations: I proposed that the *ghatuk* be commissioned to proceed to the village adjoining the one we intended to plunder, and hunt up a marriageable girl for a respectable Brahmin in easy circumstances. When a suitable damsel was found the match-maker would proceed in accordance with the custom of the country to negotiate a marriage. This settled, the services of the astrologer would be called into requisition and an auspicious day fixed for the ceremony. The "Mock Rajah" who is the best looking man of our band will act as bridegroom. The marriage ceremony must be made an imposing affair. All the frontier police are to be invited, and the guests liberally supplied with intoxicants, both for drinking and smoking. "If this proposal meet with general approval," said I, "I will guarantee the success of the expedition."

Here the Baboo begged to propose an amendment and permission being granted by the chief, he said: "Gentlemen, though I cannot but admire the ingenuity of the plan proposed by the last speaker to defeat the police, I nevertheless think I have something better to offer. What do you think of this. I will write an anonymous letter to the Head Constable setting forth that a village about two miles away from the one we propose to plunder will be visited by dacoits on the night of our expedition. This will draw off the police to the threatened point of attack and we can in that case carry through our plans without fear of opposition. The chief in reply pointed out that the Baboo's scheme was a very old one and the police were not likely to be deceived by it. My proposal was then put to the vote and carried *nem con*. "It had," the chief explained, "the charm of novelty to recommend it."



Besides, he said, there is something so romantic and exciting in the idea of a marriage festival preceding and actually being made subservient to the carrying out of a big dacoity, like the one contemplated. Why, it puts one in mind of the magnificent ball to which all the youth and beauty of Paris were treated by the English Officers, the night before the battle of Waterloo was fought! The French were handsomely treated by their enemies before being licked. We cannot do better than follow so good an example, and feast our intended victims before betraying them.

This settled the matter in dispute. The following morning the *ghatak* started on his mission. He was successful, and the best of the joke is that the bride's people thought they were playing off a double game on the bridegroom, and actually bribed the *ghatak* to keep the matter a profound secret. The bridegroom was represented, as I have already stated, to be a high caste Brahmin in good circumstances, while the bride's people, though well to do in a worldly sense, were not of the same priestly caste.

The *ghatak* returned to report progress to his chief. Two days afterwards a deputation on behalf of the bridegroom carried presents to the bride elect. The guests were received with every demonstration of joy and delight, and the *Vagdam*, or betrothal, was consummated. As the parents of the bride were anxious that the marriage should be celebrated] without delay, the astrologer who accompanied the deputation, was requested to fix a day for the purpose. The astrologer accordingly set to work at once, and after a few hours study and calculation fixed upon the 24th of *Phalgun*, a day, he declared to be eminently auspicious, as the solar, lunar, planetary, and stellar influences on that day were particularly benignant.

This matter settled, the deputation returned to their cave to prepare for the coming event. In the meantime the band of free-booters amused themselves at the expense of the would-be-bridegroom. They went through the process of anointing his lady with oil and *turmeric*, as is customary among the Hindoos in real marriages. Then they got up *aundhabhojana* or bachelors' dinners in his honour. Amongst the Hindoos these dinners are given to the near relations of the bridegroom and are so termed from the circumstances that they are the last dinners of which he will partake, while in a state of bachelorhood. They are made the occasion of a great deal of fun and rejoicing. The *ghatak* takes up his position by the side of the bridegroom and descants witty and eloquently on the nameless graces of the bride elect, to the infinite amusement of the guests. The forthcoming marriage is compared to the union of *Madhava* and *Malati* in the Sanskrit play of that name. The bridegroom is dressed up in gaudy clothes, crowned with a tinsel crown, and shoes embroidered with silver placed on his feet. Thus attired, he is seated in a *chaturdola* (marriage palki) borrowed for the occasion from one of the state officials and carried three times, round the village—but as there was no village near, the robbers' cave, followed by the whole band of dacoits carrying *rángmasals* or Bengal lights, as they are called by Europeans, and shouting at the top of their voice *ulu ! ulu ! ulu !* This procession, which the chief called a "dress rehearsal" was deemed almost perfect, all that was wanted to complete the spectacle was a native band, and this want the chief promised to supply. A band of musicians was consequently engaged for the occasion, consisting of *jagajhampa*, four *dhols*, two *kansis*, two *sanais*, and one set of *rausanchaukis*. This popular band which had officiated

at all the marriages in the district since the memory of the oldest inhabitant, was considered equal to six-finger Jimmey's celebrated band in Calcutta. Its liquid melody and delicious harmony not only soothed the savage breast, it actually fascinated all who heard it.

At last the auspicious twenty-fourth of *Phalgun* arrived. The bride's people had made every preparation for the marriage, every person of note for miles round, including the frontier and village police, were invited to the wedding festival and nuptial ceremony. All the guests were seated on *satranjis* under a canvas canopy on the tiptoe of expectation, when the sound of music and the glare of torches denoting the approach of the bridegroom's party were seen and heard in the distance. The father of the bride accompanied by a few male relations went out to meet his intended son-in-law, whom he conducted to the centre of the canvas canopy where he was soon surrounded by numerous enquiring friends. Hookahs were prepared, lit, and handed round. And in a short time every one was engaged talking and smoking. The guests were thus employed when the family priest announced that the auspicious hour, when the bride and bridegroom were to become man and wife, had arrived, an hour selected by the famous astrologer when the sun, moon, and stars, shed their most benign influence on the happy pair. Whereupon the bride's father came forth and with folded hands and a piece of cloth round his neck in token of humility and submission to the will of fate, stood in the midst of the assembly and said "Sirs, as the *layna* (propitious moment) has arrived, with the consent of all my caste people here assembled, I will proceed to celebrate the marriage of my daughter Alanga (graceful) to Goramanik" (fair diamond) for that was the name the mock



Rajah had assumed for the occasion. Several voices cried out—"We have no objection, and may the blessing of *Prajapati* descend on the happy pair." With this began the ceremony of *striachara*, which usually takes place in the zenana, or inner courtyard of Hindoo houses, but on the present occasion, a large plot of ground had been fenced in with matting for the purpose. There was a raised platform in the centre, at the four corners of which stood four plantain trees, round which threads were passed. Here the bridegroom took his stand. The bride was next brought in and in the midst of rejoicing and shouts of *ulu ! ulu ! ulu !* was whirled round the bridegroom and the plantain trees seven times. This done *barace* was performed. That is a brass plate was filled with fruit and vegetables and carried to the bridegroom who touched them with his forehead, while the family priest recited holy *mantras*.

This concluded the marriage ceremony, and the bride's father now set to work to provide the guests with refreshments. It was no easy task considering the number present; but it was satisfactorily performed for all that. By midnight all the women within the enclosure were enjoying themselves to the height of their bent, and singing the praises of the bride, while the men outside, more especially the police, were both happy and glorious, o'er all the ills of life victorious. The *bang* indulged in after a sumptuous dinner had done its work! and now began to slip away one by one, all the friends who had accompanied the bridegroom to the festive scene, to join their companions in the doomed village. The bridegroom was the last to slink away. We all met as previously arranged in a mangoe tope to the south of the village, and bore down upon the deserted houses in full strength. Accus-

tomed, as we were to this kind of work, we had no difficulty in finding out the secret places where the treasure was concealed, and half an hour sufficed to clear out the entire village.

While returning to our cave in the mountains laden with spoil we encountered a military guard escorting government revenue to the district treasury. The temptation was too great to be resisted. Our band outnumbered the escort—two to one, and although we had no guns with us, we were all otherwise well provided for a stiff tussle at close quarters. So after a short consultation it was decided to loot the treasure. We had hoped that the escort on seeing our numbers would yield up its charge without a struggle. In this we were mistaken. The order to stand and deliver was answered by a volley from the escort. Three of our numbers fell, two, including our brave chief mortally wounded, and one, myself, maimed. Before the smoke had cleared away the escort had drawn the hackeries conveying the treasure right across the narrow jungle track by which it was proceeding and thus formed an impassable barrier behind which it was cut off from the dacoits. The outlaws seeing their chief fall and the position of affairs, thought discretion the better part of valour and made tracks through the jungle.

When all was over the sepoy bound up my wound and brought me a prisoner to the district head-quarters. I was sent to hospital, and on my recovery tried, convicted of dacoity, and sentenced to transportation, across the Black Water, for the term of my natural life. I bowed my head to the will of fate and yielded, without a murmur, to the inevitable.

I had been five years at the Andamans when my conduct attracted the notice of the governor. He spoke to

me one morning as he was going his rounds, said he had noticed with pleasure how industrious and attentive to duty I had always been; and ended by enquiring if I would like to get married. I joined my hands and making a low obeisance answered in the affirmative. "Very good," said he, "go to my office and await my return." I dropped my hoe, I had been working in the garden, and proceeded as directed to the governor's office. I squatted down in the verandah to await his return. I had not been long here before I was joined by a buxom young woman of some five and twenty summers. She, too, had attracted the notice of the governor for her industry and good behaviour and was now going to have her reward in a partner for life. She squatted down also in the verandah to await the return of the governor, but with her back to me and as far away as possible.

Such were our positions when the governor returned after making his tour of inspection. He ordered us to stand up and face one another. We did so, but the woman drew the corner of her chudder across her face and held her head down. She was the first addressed by the governor. "Well, my good woman," he said, "will you have this man," pointing to me, "for your future husband?" "*Ha Khudawand!*" (Yes, my lord) was the timid reply. He then turned to me and asked if I would accept the woman as my future spouse. I replied in the affirmative, and we were pronounced man and wife. We lived together very contented and happy in the Settlement for about five years after our marriage. Then we were informed that the great *Maharanee* of the *Sabih logue* had been proclaimed Empress of India, and that in commemoration of the event two thousand prisoners were to be pardoned and set at liberty. My wife and I, I was told,



had been recommended for the *Maharanee's* clemency. I could have jumped out of my skin with delight when I first heard the news; my wife was even more affected by the intelligence, if that were possible, than I was. She sat down and literally shed tears of joy.

But here a change came o'er the spirit of my dream of liberty and happiness. I learned for the first time, on the voyage home, that my wife, who was a Calcutta woman, had been married before she was transported, and had two children by her first husband. All three were living, so my wife was told by a khulassee of the steamer, who knew the parties. Here was a nice kettle of fish! and I began already to feel the scorpion stings of jealousy. What would become of me and my two children, I thought, if my wife was claimed by her first husband! The bare thought was maddening! I could stand it no longer, so I put the question to my wife point blank. Would she forsake her convict husband and children for her first love, were he to come forward and claim her on landing? She declared she would not. This assurance in a manner satisfied me. And all went well till the day after landing.

We were seated in the compound of the old female prison at Alipore, now the Reformatory school for juvenile offenders, talking over the events of the voyage and forming plans for the future, our two children playing with pebbles beside us, when a cry of pain was heard in the direction of the main entrance. My wife jumped to her feet like a flash of lightning, and ran to the spot from where the cry proceeded. I watched her movement with a beating heart and the next instant saw her with the crying child in her arms smothering it with caresses! All my worst fears were now realised. It was her own

child by her first husband! The father of the child, it appears, had, on the day previous, endeavoured to gain admission to see his wife but failed. He now came armed with an order from Mr. Charles, the Officiating Deputy Commissioner of Police, not only to see the woman but to take her away.\* He had brought his two children with him to meet their mother, and in the crush at the gate one of the little ones, the youngest, got trampled on and began to cry. Though the child was only a year old when the mother was transported, she now, nearly ten years afterwards, recognised the voice of her own offspring! Was it maternal instinct? I believe it was. When the question was subsequently put to the woman herself, how she came to recognise the voice of a child from whom she had been parted ten years, she replied, "Don't the sheep know the bleat of their own lambs? Why then shouldn't I know the cry of my own child?"

After caressing the child my wife caught sight of her first husband; the moment their eyes met and they recognised each other there was a scene I shall never forget. Suffice it to say I had seen enough to convince me that she would never again return to my protection.

But here arose another difficulty. Though my wife had made up her mind to return to her first love, her heart, I could see yearned towards my children, and she felt reluctant to part with them. I determined to make the most of this. And as she was leaving the compound with her first husband, my children called upon her in the wildest accents of despair to return and abide with them. She stood for a moment irresolute how to act and as their cries became louder and louder she turned and flew back to them, and taking them up in her arms would have

\* Fact, every word of it!

carried them off had I not interfered to prevent it. She then sat down beside the children and refused to move without them. The Deputy Commissioner of Police was appealed to. He decided that the woman was free to go with either husband, but that she had no claim to the children of the man she refused to live with. On hearing this, she rose slowly, and after embracing my children, hurried away from the spot with her first husband. That was the last I ever saw of the mother of my children.

This brings the history of my eventful life up till the present moment. I have consequently no more confessions to make; so, with your permission, will say *salam!* and retire.

FINIS.













RARE BOOK  
COLLECTION



THE LIBRARY OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTH CAROLINA  
AT  
CHAPEL HILL

Mystery-  
Detective  
I7

